

More balance

daugiaubalanso.lt



ISBN 978-609-8108-05-7

Authors of the publication:

Mintautė Jurkutė, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson

Paulius Rymeikis, social advertising agency “Nomoshiti”

Ieva Laugalytė, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson

Case study presented by **Kristina Vabolytė** (Senior HR Partner at “Swedbank”) and

Margarita Jankauskaitė (Center for Equality Advancement)

Design by **Nerijus Šimkus**

Edited and proof-read by **Sandra Balžekaitė**

Illustrations by **Žilvinas Jagėla**

Translation to English by **Agnė Pakšytė**

„Modern Dads“ photos:

Martynas Ambrazas (pages 85, 87, 90, 92, 97, 98, 99, 104)

Gabrielė Grėbliūnė (pages 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88, 91, 95, 96, 100, 101, 103)



This publication was created in the framework of “Everybody’s Talking: Work-Life Balance Goes Mainstream”. The project is partially funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

Project partners:



LYGIŲ GALIMYBIŲ
KONTROLIERIAUS
TARNYBA



NOMOSHITI



LYGIŲ
GALIMYBIŲ
PLĖTROS
CENTRAS



Daugiau
balanso

More information: – www.daugiaubalanso.lt

You can find the electronic publication at – www.daugiaubalanso.lt/leidinys

Table of Contents

Part I. Find Balance in Your Life	5
1. On Achieving Work-Life Balance	6
2. Work-Life Balance Formula: How Can You Balance All of It?	7
The Work-Life Balance Formula	8
1. Work	12
2. Family	18
3. Health and Physical Fitness	25
4. Sleep	30
5. Personal Time	34
6. Emotional Wellbeing	39
7. Community and Social Connections	45
8. Intellectual Activity	49
9. Spirituality and Religion	53
10. Home and Housework	56
11. Wasted Time	61
What's next?	65
Useful Resources	67
3. Modern Dads	77
4. How to Achieve a Better Work-Life Balance? Ways and Means	103

Part II. A Toolkit for Employers	109
1. Work-Life Balance: Stages of Change	110
2. Recommendations and Tips for Employers	113
2.1. A Holistic Approach: Means, Work Culture, and Communication	113
2.2. Work-Life Balance Measures	114
2.3. Creating a Healthy Work Culture and Communicating	120
3. Checklist of Work-life Balance Measures.	123
4. Good Practice: A “Swedbank” in Lithuania Case Study	125
Preparation	127
Collection of Administrative Data	127
Focus Group: A Deeper Look	128
Employee Survey	128
Situation Analysis	129
The Action Plan	130
To Conclude: What Is Important to Keep in Mind?	132
Annexes	134
Annex 1. Example of an Administrative Data Questionnaire	134
Annex 2. Example of a Focus Group Questionnaire.	135
Annex 3. Example of a Table for Selecting Focus Group Participants	136
Annex 4. Example of an Employee Survey Questionnaire	137
Annex 5. Example of a Company’s Work-Life Balance Action Plan	140

Part I.

Find Balance in Your Life

Authors:

Mintautė Jurkutė, Expert in the Office of the Equal Opportunities
Ombudsperson, manager of project “More Balance”

Paulius Rymeikis, creative director of project “More Balance”,
director of social advertising agency “Nomoshiti”

1. On Achieving Work-Life Balance

“We all think that in the future, we are wonderful people.”

– Dan Ariely

Speaking in general terms, the concept of work-life balance highlights that a fulfilled existence in this world calls for a balance between work and private life since both are essential for us to Live (from capital L) instead of merely surviving. While it sounds like a beautiful idea, enacting it literally and straightforwardly (I come to work on time, I leave on time, the rest of the time is for myself) has caused and is still yielding more problems than it aimed to solve. Why? First, it has to do with the idea that work-life balance is not a process but a result, a state that anyone can achieve on any given day. At least two major problems are embedded in such an approach:

- trying to maintain the balance every day in every area of life, despite a child falling sick or a fire breaking out at work (literally or figuratively), only causes more imbalance and chaos.
- what provides young people with fulfilment and satisfaction (career, travel, material well-being) will not necessarily provide it to older people (who tend to focus more on relationships, health, community, and spirituality).

Work-life balance may also sound like a contradiction, if not a dilemma – either work or personal life with no middle ground. To achieve actual balance, we should think about the partnership and complementarity between these two parts of life: how can we make them complement each other without clashing, and serve to enrich your life? This requires flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and organisational and coordination skills. The balance between work and private life is not static, and it is normal for things to change all the time. It is important to accept this, get ready to adapt and pay attention to the issues that arise.

Work-life balance has more to do with managing our energy than using the time we have more efficiently. We are more productive, creative, and better able to solve problems and deal with challenges when we are well-rested, have strong social ties, and take good care of our physical and emotional health.

In this publication, you will find plenty of practical tips to help you focus on different areas of your life, maybe even discover new ones. We invite you to experiment, explore, and experience moments of joy throughout this process!

2. The Work-Life Balance Formula: How Can You Balance All of It?

The authors of the daugiaubalanso.lt project have developed a work-life formula - an interactive tool¹ using which anyone can put together their personal work-life balance formula and improve their quality of life in different areas.

The formula includes 11 areas of life: Work, Family, Health and Physical Fitness, Sleep, Personal Time, Emotional Health, Community and Social Connections, Intellectual Activity, Spirituality and Religion, Home and Housework, and Wasted Time.

We invite you to look at work-life balance and the reconciliation of the different areas of life as:

- A unique solution (or answer) for each person.
- A process in which your balance and well-being in the long term are more important than how much you had to work on Wednesday, or how much time you could spend on yoga on Thursday. Maybe one week will be harder at work, maybe the whole month will be harder than the following one, but at the same time... Maybe later you will go on holiday, or start working part-time, or hire more people in your department, which will allow you to work more flexibly from home and spend more time on your family?
- An insurance for difficult days or periods in your life.

Imagine that your whole life, like a table or a chair, has legs. One leg is work, and the other is your personal life, which we usually imagine as family and children. But personal life (or life in general) is much more than that; it is also health (sleep, diet, physical fitness), hobbies, friends, emotional health, spirituality, religion, home, etc. The more legs you have and the stronger they are, the less likely it is that the entire house of your life will collapse if one of the legs suddenly breaks down. Often the opposite occurs: half of your life seems to collapse when you lose your job. The same thing happens when you lose someone close to you or your children move out and start living their own separate lives. That, however, doesn't have to be the case. We invite you to play around with the formula. We hope you not only mark how much time you spend on each area of your life (or leg) but also consider the advantages of each leg, how much you would like to spend or could spend on it if it could lead you to a more interesting, fulfilled, and beautiful life. You don't have to do it today. Maybe tomorrow? Maybe sometime this week? Starting from next month? That's fine. Just try it.

We all have 168 hours a week: Dalai Lama, Pope Francis, the president of the United States and of Lithuania, your beloved sportsmen, actors, singers, politicians, TV hosts, professors, policemen, and startupper. How do you want to use this time?

¹ Available at: <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/formule/>.

Work-Life Balance Formula

Work-life balance formula is an interactive tool, available at: www.daugiaubalanso.lt/formule. Below, you will find a shortened version of it. This formula is based on self-evaluation of different areas of life:

How much time do you spend on each of the areas per week?

Ideally, how much would you like to spend on each area?

After writing down numbers, you will see graphs representing the factual and the ideal distribution of hours and your personal formula with “+” signs (how many additional hours you would like to spend on this area) and “-” signs (how many hours you would like to deduct from this area). In the menu, you will find the resources section and descriptions of each area with explanations how they contribute to work-life balance, how to find more time for them, and where to start.

Time you spend:

Time you would like to spend:

Work



Add up all of it: work, tasks you bring home, reading emails, work calls after work hours and on weekends, reading work-related literature, going to work and back, training, studying, participating in conferences, looking for a job, etc.



How much time would you like to spend on professional activities? Does this time align with the hours you officially work? When you work overtime, do you feel guilt over not spending time with your family, hobbies, social connections, and other areas of life?

Family



How much quality time do you have with your family (parents, significant other, children, grandparents, brothers, sisters, etc.)? For example, how often do you have lunch together, work on common projects, pursue hobbies, etc.? Being physically together but scrolling on your phone does not count as quality time.



How much time would you like to spend with your family to not feel guilty (follow your inner voice, not societal norms)? How much would you need to not grow apart but grow closer, be happier, and maintain a strong bond based on trust and connectedness?

Time you spend:

Time you would like to spend:

Health and Physical Fitness

7

0 168 hours/week

How much time per week do you dedicate to movement? How much time to you spend examining what you're eating and reading labels? How often do you take care of your health (e.g., getting a massage, doing relaxation exercises, taking supplements, etc.)?

11

0 168 hours/week

How much time would be appropriate to focus on your health? Is it worth getting to know what you're eating and how it affects you? How often should you get health checks to not regret it in the future? Do you have a health or fitness objective in mind? How much time would you need to achieve it?

Sleep

56

0 168 hours/week

Add the time spent on sleep during workdays and weekends. Count how much time you devoted to sleep, not how much sleep you actually got: you can improve sleep quality without increasing the duration. Naps have enough benefits to be mentioned here but skip them when counting the time spent on sleep.

56

0 168 hours/week

On average, scholarly research recommends sleeping 8 hours a night (7-9 hours). How many hours would you need? The objective is to wake up without feeling like you could pass out again in a couple of hours, you wouldn't need coffee right away, or compensate for the lack of sleep on weekdays during the weekends. So how many hours would you really need?

Personal time

7

0 168 hours/week

These are the activities you enjoy. Not your employee, significant other, or children, but you. This includes sports, hobbies, travelling, reading books, etc. The main question should be if by spending time on these activities, do I feel better and more energised, or even more drained and exhausted?

14

0 168 hours/week

Does what you already have bring joy to you? If you need an hour a week to clean your thoughts and recharge your mind with new ones, take that hour. If you need a whole day, take the whole day. If you won't devote this hour for yourself now, you might have to dedicate entire months or even years later.

Emotional Wellbeing

0

0 168 hours/week

Each of us feel and express emotions probably every day. The question is how successful we are at it, do we notice and understand our feelings? After a conflict or an emotional outburst, do you take the time to process why it happened? How much time do you spend on this?

1

0 168 hours/week

Most of our interpersonal conflicts stem from several reasons: hiding or withholding emotions, failing to express emotions in an appropriate way, or not being able to react to the emotions of others in an appropriate way. How much time would you like to spend reflecting, understanding your emotions, resting from work, challenges, and stress, or just being with yourself?

Time you spend:

Time you would like to spend:

Community and Social Connections

2

0  168 hours/week

How much time do you spend with your friends, on your relationships to other people and activities that contribute to the wellbeing of the community? How much time do you spend on volunteering, donating, taking part in political parties or religious communities, organising events at work or at schools?

12

0  168 hours/week

How much time would you like to spend on maintaining social connections or community work? Research shows that such activities improve mental health, strengthen the sense of self-realisation, improve social connections, and promote self-pride.

Intellectual Activity

3

0  168 hours/week

How much time do you spend learning something new (watching the news doesn't count)? For example, reading non-fiction and non-work-related literature, a scientific, historical, biographical book, trying a new recipe, etc. In other words, do you stimulate your brain in an enjoyable way? How much time do you spend on that?

10

0  168 hours/week

How much time would you need to spend on intellectual activities to not feel "rusty"? To feel like you can learn new things and become a better, more interesting, and multifaceted version of yourself?

Spirituality and Religion

3

0  168 hours/week

How much time per week do you devote to spirituality and religiosity (the way you define it)? To prayer, religious practice, yoga, meditation? To visiting places of worship and reading on spirituality? To searching for your place in this world?

5

0  168 hours/week

How much time you would spend on spirituality and religiosity if someone gave you those additional hours? How important is this part of your personality to you? Is it more or less important than other parts? Why?

Home and Housework

25

0  168 hours/week

How much time do you spend tidying up, cooking, shopping, doing laundry, gardening, repairing your car and household appliances, and solving all other home-related issues?

2

0  168 hours/week

How much time would you like to spend? Do you share housework equally with your significant other and other family members?

Time you spend:

Time you would like to spend:

Wasted Time



How many minutes or even hours a day would you like to take back? The time you realise was wasted scrolling online, rolling around in bed, watching TV out of inertia, meeting up with friends or colleagues out of politeness, etc.

De facto work-life balance = FORMULA™

168 hours

- Work **44**
- Family **7**
- Health and Physical Fitness **7**
- Sleep **56**
- Personal time **7**
- Emotional Wellbeing **0**
- Community and Social Connections **2**
- Intellectual Activity **3**
- Spirituality and Religion **3**
- Home and Housework **25**
- Wasted Time **14**



Sometimes, you do need to let your thoughts wander. But do it consciously. Plan that every day you will spend X minutes on news, TV, and social media. If you don't plan your time, someone else will do it for you.

Ideal work-life balance = FORMULA™

168 hours

- Work **36**
- Family **14**
- Health and Physical Fitness **11**
- Sleep **56**
- Personal time **14**
- Emotional Wellbeing **1**
- Community and Social Connections **12**
- Intellectual Activity **10**
- Spirituality and Religion **5**
- Home and Housework **2**
- Wasted Time **7**

Difference between de facto and ideal + work-life balance = FORMULA™

- Work **-8**
- Family **+7**
- Health and Physical Fitness **+4**
- Sleep **0**
- Personal time **+7**
- Emotional Wellbeing **-1**

- Community and Social Connections **+10**
- Intellectual Activity **+7**
- Spirituality and Religion **+2**
- Home and Housework **-23**
- Wasted Time **-7**

Overtime

or

Quality



Work

Work

“You will never feel truly satisfied by work until you are satisfied by life.”

– Heather Schuck (“The Working Mom Manifesto”)

Work takes up an enormous amount of time in our lives. For many people, work takes up more time than basic needs, such as sleep, or the rest of non-working activities combined. This includes not only the hours spent physically at work but the time you spend taking an interest in your professional area, learning (formally and informally), participating in work-related social activities, reading professional literature and news, writing e-mails and messages on weekends and holidays, making business calls, etc. By devoting too much time to professional obligations, many people risk damaging their social connections, family ties, emotional and physical health, and other areas of life. To prevent this from happening, we need a lot of conscious effort to restore the right balance between work and private life, without forgetting what really matters and contributes to the life you want to live.

Things to avoid

Overtime and work after work. It is normal to sometimes work after working hours, on weekends, or during holidays. Sometimes. It is not normal for overtime work to become the norm. At some stage of our lives, we all have undertaken important tasks or projects that require our total concentration and attention for most of the day. Maybe we pulled an all-nighter or two (or even more) and sacrificed all other areas of life to finish something important. When the objective is ambitious and meaningful, such an agreement with yourself (and others) can be made and followed through. Most importantly, this should not become a routine, day-to-day practice. If that’s the case - stop and reflect on what happened, why it happened, and how you can free yourself of it.

Overworking, constant stress, and feeling pressure over unfinished work. Pressure, stress, and anxiety can interfere with our ability to concentrate and make the right decisions. When we are tense, we make more mistakes than usual. This harms the quality of our work. When we overwork, we tend to think we can get out of it by working even more. The, we find ourselves stuck in a kind of trap that’s hard to get out of.

Absence of boundaries. Your time and energy have clear boundaries beyond which there is no more space for other areas of life. Because we can’t do everything we might want to, we must choose between things that really matter and things we can give up. It’s not good if one area of life starts to dominate and obscures all the others. If this happens with work,

boundaries have to be redrawn. Setting clear boundaries increases productivity, creativity, and freedom. Paradoxically, we often do more, faster, and better when we work less.

Perfectionism. Sometimes it's great to just do something without doing it as well as humanly possible. You shouldn't do things negligently or consciously poorly but be gentle with yourself, especially when there is more work than you have time for.

Lack of rest. If you're tired, you can't expect to work as well as after a good and high-quality night of sleep. Listen to your body and respect its boundaries. Rest – and above all, good and sufficient sleep! – is the cornerstone of productive and meaningful work.

Availability 24/7. The modern world and new technologies keep us in contact with others around the clock. This harms our health, social bonds, recreation, and focus. Being in constant contact and, with the help of smartphones, always available, we are no longer able to disconnect and detach ourselves from work and associated strains. It doesn't allow us to be the masters of our own time anymore.

Questions to ask yourself if your work starts to dominate your life:

- Why do I work so hard? What makes me do this?
- Do I work so hard to get recognition and confirmation of my value from others?
- Do I work overtime to avoid concerns about my family (such as raising children, housework, and other issues that require my time and attention)?
- Why don't I delegate the tasks that other colleagues can complete? Why don't I ask other colleagues for help when I have too many tasks?
- Do I feel safe in the position that I hold? Do I feel afraid that if I work less, I will be laid off or someone else, who can do my job faster and better, will come around?

Try answering these questions honestly (after all, you're talking to yourself). The answers can lead to other relevant questions that will also require a sincere response. This will help you identify the areas of life that demand your attention or solutions the most.

How to find more time?

There are countless tips on curbing work after work. Numerous books, articles, and web pages have been dedicated to this. Below, you will find several recurring ones. At the end of the chapter, there is also a list of recommended books and other resources that can open new horizons for readings (or other forms of information) if you feel like learning more on this topic.

Set priorities. And really follow them. Look at your calendar and consider whose priorities is it filled with – yours or other people's? Control what's in your power. For example, your time and the choice of what to spend it on. Don't waste your time on things you don't have direct influence and control over. We're solely responsible for our personal actions, behaviours, and choices, so this should be our focus. When it comes to the complementarity between private life and work, we must choose what is the most important to us, and what creates the most value. When we focus too much on one area of life, we risk breaking down in case it gets out of hand (for example, you lose your job or someone close to you). The more support points you create, the more colourful, diverse, and robust your life will be. Some areas of life are not restored as simply as others. If you lose your job, you're likely to find another one but what happens if you get sick or lose friends or family because of your own negligence?

Set clear boundaries on how much, when, and how you work. Longer working hours do not mean higher productivity. Various studies show that productivity decreases when working more than 50 hours a week. Respect your time and use it reasonably. One of the simplest ways is planning your time for specific tasks in advance and saying no.

Plan your time. Right now. Don't wait until you catch up with all the work to start paying attention to work-life balance. It will never happen if you don't consciously spend time on it right here and now.

Start each day with a plan of what you have to do today. Write down all the tasks that should be done, review the plan very critically, and mark each item with the following letters: A - important and urgent; B - important, but can wait; C - should be done but not in a hurry; D – I can ask for help with this or delegate it to others (these tasks should be handed over or renegotiated). Start with A-marked tasks and do not jump to other tasks until category A is complete. Only after that move to B-and C-marked tasks. If you don't have any time left today, review the list tomorrow and mark the order of tasks again. Do not prioritise new tasks received during the day if they are not urgent. Rather, put them on a list that you will review tomorrow morning. This may look like another extra task that takes extra time but believe me - a day well-planned in the morning saves a lot of time and helps concentrate your attention on where you need it the most. If certain tasks never receive an "A" or a "B", maybe you don't really need to complete them, or perhaps they should be delegated to others. Or maybe no one should do them?

In "Win at Work and Succeed at Life", the authors Ms. Hyatt and Ms. Hyatt Miller argue that there are 3 areas of our lives that should not be negotiated when we plan our time. In other words, these are things that must get your primary attention and can't be sacrificed for work-related tasks. Those are:

² This is how many hours you should really be working: <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/productivity/this-is-how-many-hours-you-should-really-be-working#:~:text=But%20that's%20okay,.at%20work%20and%20at%20home>.

³ Daugiau apie tai skaitykite <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/darbuotojai/atsiribojimas-nuo-darbiniu-klausimu-poisio-laiku/>.

- Caring for yourself. This includes everything that replenishes and refills the body and the mind: good sleep, nutritious diet, movement and exercise, meaningful leisure, hobbies, time for yourself, etc.
- Relations with people close to you. This includes time with children, significant other, dinner with family, weekly meetings with a friend for lunch, etc.
- Professional achievements. This includes things that create the highest value for you as a professional in your field. Not mundane everyday tasks but the grand projects or commitments in the professional field.

How do you find time for these things? By consciously allocating the time in your calendar. Reserve a time slot on your work calendar in advance (you can devote time to this task at the beginning of the week). It is crucial that you write down in your calendar all the things you assign to these three categories: taking a walk in the forest, yoga, time with your children, your daughter's school performance or her training session that you want to see, a date with your significant other, calling your dad, lunch with your best friend, reviewing and planning the key projects at work, time for yourself (yes, set up dates with yourself!), etc. If you exclude these key things from your calendar, other things will likely take their place and occupy your energy and attention instead. When it's hard to say no, use your calendar to do it for you: "No, I can't take on this task because I am busy at that time."

Focus on other areas of your life. Work is just one of them. Take care of other areas – your friends, family, physical and emotional health, sleep, leisure, hobbies, etc. Think about what is currently the most neglected and what you would like to focus on while stepping away from overwork. We often think that the high pace at work is temporary, we are about to catch up with everything, and then we will be able to enjoy everything outside of work. Pause and think about how long you have been repeating this to yourself and whether things are really changing. If the answer is no, initiate tangible changes right now, such as inviting your friends to dinner tomorrow at your place. When you free up your evenings and weekends from work, fill them with activities you may have neglected.

Don't let others control your time. When we are constantly available, sometimes it can be difficult to listen to yourself and your needs. If you feel like you can no longer spend 10 minutes without checking your phone, the time has come to take some time off for yourself. Experiment with what works best for you. Maybe it's screen-free hours, strictly sticking to working hours after which you don't read emails or messages, turning off all notifications on your phone, disconnecting from the internet for at least a few hours a day, especially before bedtime, going out for a walk, or leaving your phone at home and meeting friends. You know best what works best for you. The advice is rather simple - if you think it causes a problem, take the time to actively address it.

In your free time, do something other than work. Hard-working people often find it difficult to not be working. Not only because of the ever-increasing workload but also

because of the lack of alternatives to work. What do you do with all the time after work? Looking for new activities might seem awkward and scary at first if you have been working hard for many years and haven't developed a hobby, a habit of exercising, or engaging in any other activity (such as volunteering, active leisure with friends, etc.). Try and experiment with different things. Ask your friends, acquaintances, or colleagues what they are doing. Take time to research, and you'll surely discover something.

Control your time. If we clearly set a specific time in which we must complete certain tasks, we are more focused and forced to prioritise what really needs to be done and what is less important, can be done later, or shared with colleagues, etc. Concentration and a clear definition of what I must do in a clearly defined time frame allow you to concentrate rather than waste time on tasks that are not at all urgent. Work less, but better. Spend the rest of your time enriching your life outside of work.

Take breaks regularly. Just like children have breaks between lessons at school, you also need to take breaks between tasks or just regular pauses during the day. Taking a break from work can be an incredible opportunity to move around, do a couple of exercises, take time to reflect, walk outside, have coffee with colleagues, call someone close to you, etc. You are going to be more productive later and, at the same time, you're going to do something other than work. Sometimes you have to bring yourself to take breaks (this is especially true for those who don't practice it regularly). Try setting a reminder on your phone, and when it rings, just get off your chair or walk away from whatever you're doing.

Plan your vacation. Even better, go on vacation now! For at least two weeks, switch off all email notifications, Slack, and your business phone, and don't turn them on. Spend your time off on areas of life other THAN WORK. It can be hard at first, but eventually, the body and mind will relax, and you will return to work born anew. In the meantime, you'll have numerous opportunities to take care of the other areas of your life. It is also a good time to strengthen social ties, stay with family, engage in hobbies, etc. During your vacation, spend time on activities that replenish and restore you with new ideas and promote creativity. A two-week leave should be taken at least once a year. For a good reason, the Labour Code states: "At least one of the annual leaves may not be shorter than ten working days or not shorter than twelve working days (if one works six days a week)". If you can't take a holiday right now, at least plan it!

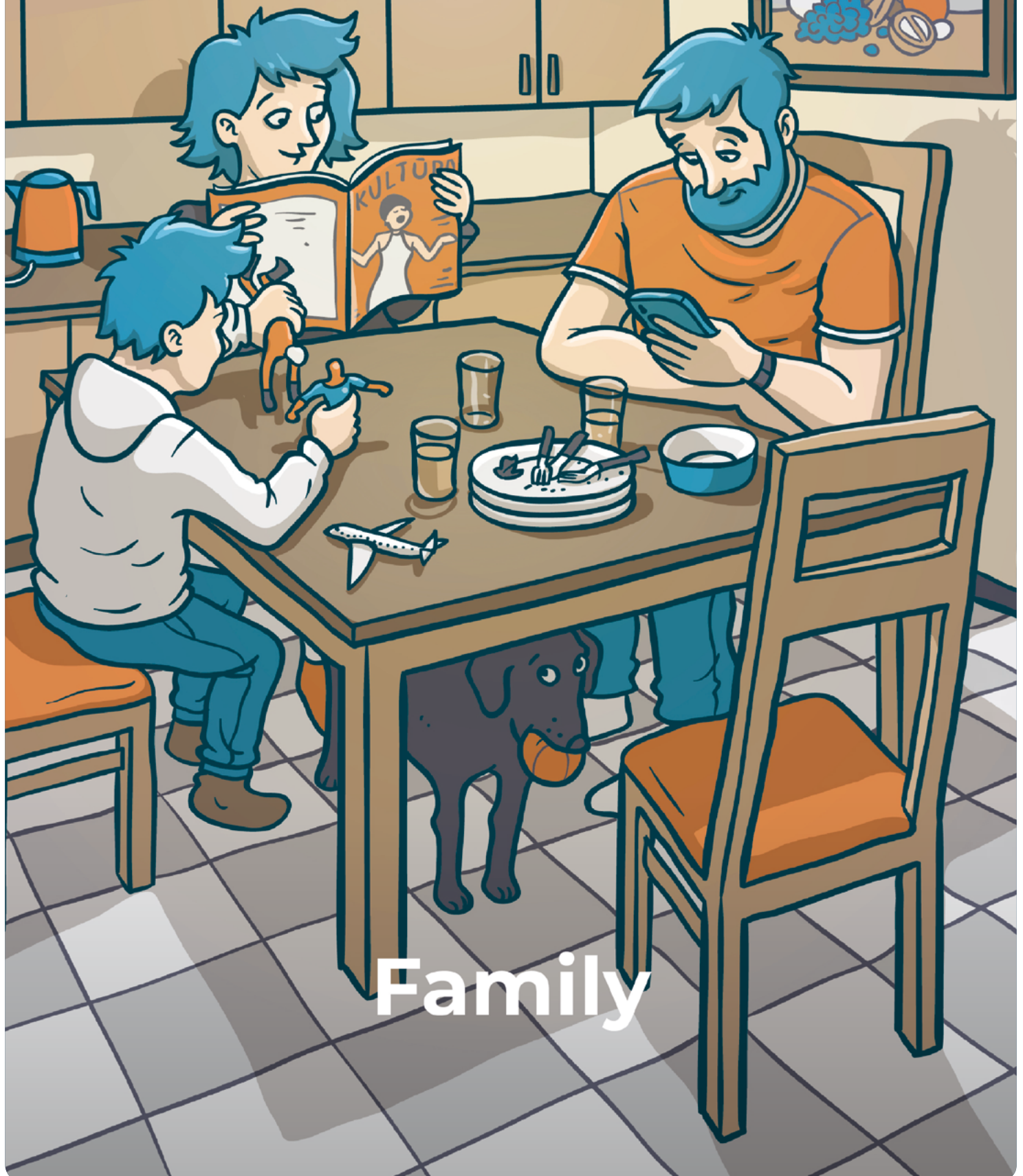
To conclude, remember that work is just one area of life. What the bigger picture of your life looks like is up to you. The more diverse it is, the richer each of its areas gets.

⁴ Lietuvos Respublikos darbo kodekso 128 straipsnis.

Together

or

Alone



Family

Family

“It’s amazing to me people are willing to work so hard so that one day they can have more time with their family at the actual expense of their family.”

– Richie Norton

This area includes all the time you spend with your loved ones.

The family usually takes up a lot of space in our lives. At different stages, the engagement varies and depends heavily on your role: if you are a child, brother/sister, partner, have children, grandchildren, care for older parents or grandparents, etc. Each role requires a specific amount of time, attention, and involvement. This part of life usually dominates among others and requires much more creativity, adaptation, flexibility, and adaptability to accommodate all the obligations around the clock. Especially if you have children or are responsible for the care of other family members.

Family life and what happens in it can affect us positively or negatively and hinder our productivity, ability to work, relationships with our colleagues, physical and emotional health, and other areas of life. Unlike other areas of life, you can’t detach yourself from this one, even when you’d like to. In happiness or misery (especially misery) – family needs your attention every day. So naturally, when worries, pressure, and stress arise, or something is not going as planned, it can impact all other areas of life. For this reason, it is crucial to notice the first signs indicating that it’s time to stop and take the time to take care of your family life.

Here are some signals that call your attention to family life:

You don’t want to go home. Even after a long workday, the mere idea of having to go home makes you feel bad. Being home and caring for the household and family doesn’t bring joy or satisfaction.

You work longer hours than you need to. For particularly busy people, work can become an escape plan from issues related to children, household chores, domestic concerns, relationships, etc. You may be avoiding going home on time and justifying it by having a lot of work. Despite that, longer work hours and working overtime can often leave less energy to take care of issues that still require your attention and involvement at home.

You feel psychologically and emotionally tired. It interferes with your focus, concentration, and productivity.

You can’t step away from family-related issues at work. It’s normal that if something important happens in your family, you can’t easily detach yourself from it and leave all your thoughts, feelings, and emotions at home while you’re working. Still, if this is all you think

and talk about, or you can't stop sharing all the details and asking every person you meet for advice, it can be a sign that it's time to stop and finally take care of family matters.

It's important that when you notice the first signals, you focus on finding the solutions to the problem, rather than treating the symptoms. For example, you're constantly late to dinner with your family. This strains your relationship with your significant other. You feel stressed because you know that another argument awaits if you come home late again. In this situation, it's vital to understand where the real problem lies and what is just a symptom of it. Being late is probably just a symptom, and the real problem is why you are late. Ask yourself what's going on: Is it because you don't calculate the time it takes to come home during traffic hours? Or do you feel the need to work longer because you don't have time to do all the tasks during the day? Does your manager or colleagues expect you to work overtime? Or are the issues at home stressful? Only by identifying the real problem will you be able to find the right solutions.

Where do I start?

Ask yourself a few questions: am I capable of being present with my loved ones? Am I attentive, and do I support my family as much as I can? Do I pay my full attention and time when I'm with family without thinking about other issues and jobs? Yes, or no? If not, why, and what is truly bothering me?

How to find more time?

If you want to find more time, you need to actively look for it. Start by setting clear boundaries between work and private life. If you wish for meaningful quality time with people close to you, start by defining what your time with your significant other/family should look like and deliberately pursue it.

Living in a couple

Daily routines, work, events, and challenges in other areas of our lives undoubtedly affect our relationship with our significant other. Healthy relationships improve not only emotional wellbeing but physical health, too. Whether you have children or not, you have to make an effort to maintain a vibrant, trusting, secure, open, and reciprocal relationship. Psychologist Bill Mitchell gives 10 tips in his book *Time to Breathe* on how to foster vitality in a romantic relationship.

⁵ Daugiau apie ribas skaitykite <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/darbuotojui/kaip-nustatyti-aiskias-ribas-tarp-darbo-ir-asmeninio-gyvenimo/>.

⁶ Time to Breathe. Dr. Bill Mitchell. Green Tree, 2020.

1. Take some time for just the two of you. It may seem like obvious advice, but life fills every minute, hour, and day, so the time you're about to make for each other never comes. Until you intentionally allocate a time slot, there is a good chance that time will never come. So, plan to go on dates at least once a week, go to bed together, have lunch or dinner together, or have a getaway for the weekend from time to time (without children, if you have them), etc.
2. Put your phones aside when you're communicating.
3. Laugh together. Be curious, talk, and joke around. Don't lose your playfulness and genuine interest in each other - the stories each one tells, the ideas you care about, etc. Laughing together supports vitality, closeness, and positive energy in the relationship.
4. Be conscious of the mood you bring home. Simply by asking yourself what mood you're in when stepping through the doorstep, you might change it for the better. And if at times you come home in a bad mood, be honest with your significant other about how you feel. Take time for your emotional health and switch off from worries at work. Try taking a hot shower, practicing breathing exercises, being still for a few minutes, and reflecting. You can close your workday while still at work by taking some time to assess your daily achievements, challenges, and plans for the next day. This will help you unload your working energy to not bring it home. Also, think about what's waiting for you at home, use your time on your way home to listen to music/podcasts, read a book, and stroll around.
5. Enjoy the simple pleasures. Diversify your routine with pleasant experiences. What do you like? Sports, exhibitions, cultural events, cinema, cooking together, visiting new places, walking in nature? Add this to the 168 hours of the week.
6. Maintain physical contact. Touch, massage, hug, kiss, and have sex regularly. Physical contact also enhances emotional connection and wellbeing.
7. Talk about your problems (immediately after they occur).
8. Criticise the person's actions and behaviours, not the person. Learn to accept and consider legitimate criticism. Especially if it's about what matters to the person you love.
9. Be attentive and support each other.
10. Express your gratitude and show that you appreciate your significant other. Let go of all the bad experiences and memories and don't use them to criticise or argue. Instead, tell them what you value your loved one for, what you appreciate about them, etc.

11. Strategize and consult each other. To share work at home equally, you need to discuss career expectations and opportunities, desires and dreams, potential challenges, how you can best support each other, and make work-life balance as easy as possible. Set up specific steps you can take to make it easier for both. It's normal that if you're at different stages of your career, you need different kinds of support. You must hear each other's expectations and needs and discuss them as a team.

Living with children

With the arrival of children, domestic work and chores increase constantly. If, before having children, it seemed like you never had enough time for everything you want to make time for, with children this feeling might become constant. Unless you are very organised and successful at planning and balancing out other areas of your life, you must pay attention to your health, sleep, and other activities that help you regain energy and create nurturing relationships with your loved ones.

Tips

Plan your family time. Both your time for family and your family's time with you. You can designate a time slot in the week when you're sitting down to plan what your upcoming seven days will look like. It could be on a Sunday evening. Do it with your significant other and note everything down in a virtual calendar or a sheet of paper. Both people planning (or more if you include other family members) should have access to this plan. Put down activities such as time for yourself (if you plan to simply read a book, watch a movie, walk in nature, etc.). If you don't make time for this activity on your calendar, other activities will likely take up that time during the week.

This exercise is especially useful when: (a) you want to share family and household work with your significant other equally (decide who is doing what, who is responsible for which household duties); (b) when you want to develop or strengthen one of the areas of life. For example, spending more time with your family, getting better sleep, taking better care of your physical health, etc. When the plans are written down, you have nothing left to hide behind - you have to do it.

Plan your resources. Start your day with a reflection on which things are the biggest challenges, and how you can overcome them with the resources you have: planning and organising your time and tasks, asking for help from other people, redistributing work between family members, etc.

Consult with your family. Talk openly to your family about your personal and professional needs. If you prioritise work right now, your family needs to be aware of that and collaborate

with you. Explain to your children why what you do matters and why you do it. If they know why this is important, they are likely to be more lenient about spending less time together. Thus, there will be less tension and misunderstanding.

Spend quality time together. Whether you have 10 minutes or an entire evening, if you spend time together, make sure it's quality time, and your full attention is on your family. At the time, do not check your emails or scroll online. It's better to have less time together, but with your complete commitment to being present, interested in somebody else, and paying all your attention to what you're doing.

Keep your promises. If you promised to have dinner together, do so. Sometimes agreements can be revoked, but if it becomes repetitive, the family, and especially the children, may no longer believe in you and trust you.

Make friends with your children. Be interested in your children's interests, stories, concerns and challenges, and other issues that matter to them. Who are their friends, what are their dreams and desires, what do they like and dislike, which things are going well at school, and which aren't? Talk and spend time with your children - be a part of their universe. Don't let your work and other day-to-day concerns interfere with staying in touch with your children. Create your own rituals and traditions to spend time together. Maybe you and your son/daughter can go on a hike and sleepover in a tent? Go to the cinema once a month? Go to a cafe on Sundays to eat ice cream? Spend your time on activities that strengthen your friendship.

Set up a family studio. Agree on having some time of silence and concentration every workday night when each family member would complete their daily tasks. Children could do their homework or work on other school projects, and parents would be able to concentrate on work assignments or other intellectual activities. Ideally, you can all sit down at one table or be in the same room. Set a specific time after which the whole family can move on to doing recreational activities. This exercise will help improve the skills of the entire family to plan and use time in a targeted and effective way.

Manage your household efficiently. We often spend a lot of time doing domestic chores that we could automate, share, organise better, etc. Maybe sometimes, instead of cooking at home, you can order dinner or eat outside the house (thus, shooting two birds with one stone - spending quality time with the family and taking a break from cooking). Instead of going to the store, you can buy groceries online. Instead of cleaning the house every day, you can spend more time on it during the weekend or hire external help. Instead of washing dishes by hand, buy a dishwasher. If it sounds like a luxury purchase, think about how much time you spend washing the dishes, especially with young children, and estimate how much more time you could spend on other activities that enrich you rather than weary you. Maybe the investment is worth it? Give up the things that waste your time. Spend the saved time on activities you really enjoy or rest.

Eat together. With no TV or phones. Strengthen your connection and get to know of each other better instead of being on social media.

Spend time on your hobbies every day. Spend at least 15 minutes every day on something you consider a relaxing activity: reading, meditation, driving, talking to a friend, taking a hot bath, or exercising. Just enjoy yourself without the feeling that it needs to be done. Turn these 15 minutes into a daily practice that is just for you.

Communicate your personal needs clearly at work. Since the work environment, as is the case in society, is dominated by the view that women to care of housework, those men who seek to have an equal share of work at home must put in the effort to change these norms in their workplace as well. If you need to leave work earlier for family reasons, don't hide it. Your behaviour may also encourage other colleagues to communicate openly about their family and personal life needs.

Sick with sports

or

Stay healthy



Health and Physical Fitness

Health and Physical Fitness

“It isn’t a matter of getting the body you want, it’s a matter of doing the most you can with the body you have.”

– John Bingham, *No Need for Speed: A Beginner’s Guide to the Joy of Running*

Born to Run is not only a classic Bruce Springsteen song but also a book that has become just as much of a classic among runners, written by Christopher McDougall. Even though we could argue about the theory suggested by the title of the book, scientific literature suggests that the primary purpose of the human brain is not problem-solving, creativity, or coordination of other organs. Actually, it’s movement. An extreme example of this is the tunicate. Once fully developed and attached to a rock, this aquatic invertebrate animal spends the rest of its days eating its own brain - no need to move, no need for a brain. Another example is artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence can beat the world chess champion, but that wouldn’t help robots catch a tennis ball as any five-year-old could. So, if you really want to move your brain, you should choose a workout rather than a crossword. Sport is great, but opposite to what The Flintstones might suggest, our ancestors didn’t go to the gym and didn’t lift stones instead of dumbbells. Moving around was enough.

The World Health Organisation recommends spending 150 minutes a week (about 22 a day) on easy physical activity² or 75 minutes (just seven minutes a day!) on intense physical activity. This is the minimum. If you want to reap more benefits of moving your body, you can double this recommended time. That doesn’t necessarily require going to a gym. A study involving 130,000 people from 17 countries found that going to work on foot and chores such as vacuuming, or scrubbing were sufficient activities to reduce the risk of premature death by 28 percent if done for 150 minutes a week. And that’s only the beginning. Try reframing certain activities, such as shopping or going to and from work, in your mind. Is carrying a shopping basket around the store really a struggle and a drag? Or is it exercise comparable to weightlifting at the gym? And is being stuck in traffic (whether in your own car or public transport) really better than walking? You can walk half the way or just a couple of bus stops. A study in 2019 involving nearly 150,000 Australians showed that it takes more than an hour of intense movement a day to eliminate the negative health effects of seated work³. Scientists announce that sitting is the new smoking, so maybe leaving the car at home and going to the store on foot after work is worth it? Not finding time to move is like not finding time to sleep, which is a separate part of this formula, or breathe (we

² Scott A Lear, PhD, Weihong hu, MSc, Sumathy Rangarajan, MSc, Danjela Gasevic, PhD, Darryl Leong, PhD, Romaina Iqbal, PhD et al. The Effect of Physical Activity on Mortality and Cardiovascular Disease in 130 000 People from 17 High-Income, Middle-Income, and Low-Income Countries: The PURE Study. The Lancet, volume 390, issue 10113, 2017.

³ Emmanuel Stamatakis, Joanne Gale, Adrian Bauman, Ulf Ekelund, Mark Hamer, and Ding Ding J Am Coll Cardiol. Sitting Time, Physical Activity, and Risk of Mortality in Adults. Journal of the American College of Cardiology, volume 73, No. 16, 2019.

recommend reading *Breath* by James Nestor which uncovers that most people don't know how to breathe correctly). In 2005, specialists from the US even topped the well-known diet pyramid with stairs to highlight that it is difficult to talk about good health if a person is not moving or exercising enough.

There is probably no doubt that our health, well-being, mood, and even ability to work depend on our diet, but everyone interprets differently what it means to eat healthily or unhealthily, correctly, or incorrectly. There is no universal formula for a good diet but if we put trends aside (you can't earn anew from old theories), a solid recommendation was formulated back in 2008 by Michael Pollan in his book *In Defence of Food: The Myth of Nutrition and the Pleasures of Eating*: "Eat food"⁴. Not too much. Mostly plants". In the resources list, you will also find two Michael Greger's books – *How Not to Die* and *How Not to Diet*. In the first, based only on research, Michael Greger investigates the leading causes of death in the US (which are similar to those in Lithuania) and examines their relation to diet. In the second one, *How Not to Diet*, Greger looks at the most popular diets of current times ("diet" as a dietary regime rather than a restrictive way to lose weight), how effective they are, and what you can do to achieve the best results. These books are well-acclaimed but quite lengthy, so those who want something more like a research summary should look at the Healthy Eating Pyramid, a document by the HARVARD T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Time spent on nutrition (cooking at home, reading labels, researching, etc.) will add many years of a healthy life and improve your wellbeing both now and in the future.

Lastly, a couple of words about preventive care and taking an interest in your health. Many people know more (and often are more interested) about smartwatches, phones, cars, or a celebrity living in another part of the world than about their own health or health in general. For example, 9 out of 10 Lithuanians (an optimistic number) are vitamin D deficient. The effects of its deficiency include frequent colds, persistent fatigue, low mood (as mentioned above, Michael Greger references vitamin D deficiency as related to one of the leading causes of death in the US – suicide), slow-healing of wounds, hair loss, bone pain, backaches, and muscle pain, etc. The main source of vitamin D is the Sun, which we don't get a lot of in Lithuania. Since the sky here is often characterised as zeppelin-coloured, and only a couple of months are sunny enough to make vitamin D, the easiest way to stock up on it is using supplements prescribed by a doctor. Keep in mind that most the over-the-counter supplements sold in pharmacies are meant to maintain a stable vitamin D level, not to restore it. Vitamin D deficiency serves as an example issue that most Lithuanians neither suspect nor somehow deal with it. Proper health care also requires preventive health checks and controlled use of medication (as well as antibiotics). Is it worth investing in your health, or is it something that just "is what it is"?

⁴ Meaning that one should eat real food, not processed, food-like products.

The goal here is not to lecture you on when, how, and how much you should move or exercise, what and how much to eat, or how to take care of your health. The authors of this formula want to remind you that this area is essential for our general wellbeing. It's up to you to decide whether investing in this area of life is worth it, whether this area is more important, a little more important or less important than others, is up to you to decide.

How to find the time and where do I start?

Reduce the obstacles between you and the result. Research shows that the further the gym (or just a sporting venue) is from your home, the smaller the chance of going there. As a result, it is often the simplest, easiest, and cheapest to go jogging outside or exercise at home.

Find an exercise buddy. Sometimes, it's easier to get ready to do something when you know you have already committed to someone to exercise together.

Exercise with your family or friends, thus combining quality time with family and improving your physical form.

To exercise in the morning, prepare the night before. Put running shoes and workout outfit by the bed, or, in the worst-case scenario - go to bed in running pants or shorts.

Sport (like any other activity) has to provide pleasure. If you feel bad, drained, or (unpleasantly) tired after it, you may be doing something wrong - too much, too fast, etc. Leave the logic of *per aspera ad astra* (Eng. through hardships to the stars) to professional athletes.

Try, and combine different sports or modes of movement, and find what you really like: walking, running, cycling, boxing, yoga, tennis, basketball, etc.

Give the day-to-day movement a new meaning. For example, try carrying heavy bags of groceries as if it was an alternative to lifting weights at a gym, etc.

Add all 4 main exercise groups to your arsenal: 1) aerobic/cardio, 2) strength, 3) flexibility, and 4) balance. It's better to move step by step than all at once. No need to be able to tie up your shoes without bending down when you can't go up the stairs to the fifth floor.

Replace driving by public transport or car with walking or cycling. In those cases where the distance to big, shorten it by getting off public transport a few stops earlier and taking a quick walk.

Track your activity on a smartphone via Google Fit (Android) or Apple Health (iPhone). If a smartphone is always with you, you can install additional applications that turn your phone into the best sports partner. Share your accomplishments with your friends, invite them to

join challenges, and compete.

Buy a smartwatch or a bracelet that will track your activity 24/7. If you only need the basic parameters, a 20-30 Euro device will suffice, but if you plan on getting involved in sports more seriously, choose a Garmin, Polar, Suunto, or Coros, which also allow you to track your heartbeat.

Initiate or join wellness programs at your workplace. Often employees are not aware of possible wellness-related compensations, benefits, and even having a gym in their office. Ask your workplace to provide the possibility to exercise or at least come to work by bicycle (including bicycle stands and showers).

Have car-free days (just for yourself or in your workplace) once a month or week.

Turn movement and sport into a habit with time dedicated to it in your agenda, not just something that happens when you have no other commitments. Both good and bad habits take a while to attain, but in the same way, it takes a while to lose them.

Pay attention to what you eat and understand what labels mean: “vegetable oil” is no good if it’s palm oil, “full-grain” is a better option only when the fibre-to-carbohydrate ratio is 1:5 (or less), etc.

Give yourself a healthy gift: a massage, new sports activities (swimming pool, rock climbing, CrossFit, etc.), a health check, etc.

In your healthcare institution, find out what free preventive health checks you can access.

Check your vitamin D level. There’s almost no doubt that you’re deficient; the only question is - how badly?

Check your iron (or ferritin) level, which can also be done when becoming a blood donor, thus connecting the areas of healthcare and community service in your life. Encourage the workplace to organise a donation campaign and donate blood with your colleagues.

Geraī padirbēti

ar

Geraī pailsēti



Miegas

Sleep

*“Each night, when I go to sleep, I die.
And the next morning, when I wake up, I am reborn.”*

– Mahatma Gandhi

There is plenty of statistics suggesting that people don't sleep enough, but it's not the statistics that matter the most here. The most important thing is waking up and feeling that you slept well, that you are ready to jump out of bed and make the most of a new day. If that is not the case, chances are that you have been sleeping poorly for so long that you consider not resting enough on weekdays and compensating for it on the weekends to be a normal sleep schedule. Matthew Walker, the author of the book *Why we sleep?* suggests asking yourself a couple of questions to understand if you are getting enough sleep: 1) After you wake up in the morning, could you take a nap at 10:00 or 11:00? 2) Can you function normally until midday without caffeine (coffee, tea with caffeine)? If you answered “yes” to the first question, you either lack sleep or your quality of sleep is poor. If you answered “no” to the second one, you are self-treating a chronic lack of sleep. A few other facts showing that you're not sleeping enough: 1) without an alarm clock, you couldn't wake up on time; 2) you need to re-read the same sentence, again and again, to understand what it means.

Sleep is not something to do when there is nothing to do. Rather, it is meant to prepare you for activities that await after waking. Sleep deprivation is life-threatening. For example, driving without having slept for 18 hours is comparable to driving with 0.05% blood-alcohol concentration, without having slept for 24 hours - to 1.00% (light inebriation for which the fines in Lithuania amount to 300-450 €). It is useful to take care of your sleep for the following benefits mentioned by the Healthline:

- Maintaining or losing weight.
- Improving concentration and productivity.
- Improving athletic performance.
- Strengthening heart health.
- Positively affecting sugar metabolism and lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Poor sleep is associated with depression.
- Sufficient sleep supports a healthy immune system.
- Poor sleep is associated with increased inflammation.
- Sleep quality influences emotions and relationships.

How to find more time?

Make sleep a priority. If that proves difficult, add sleep to your agenda.

Where do I start?

What should we do to sleep better?

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, on weekdays and weekends alike. Not sleeping enough on weekdays and oversleeping on weekends may amount to an average of 8 hours a day statistically, but this is an unhealthy sleep pattern.
- Exercise every day, preferably in the morning or lightly in the evening. It has been shown that regular exercise, including stretching and aerobic exercises, improves sleep.
- Spend time outdoors or in bright, natural light. If possible, start your morning by spending some time in daylight or artificial bright light to signal to the body that a new day has begun.
- Check your vitamin D level (which we should ideally get when we spend time in the sun, but we usually don't get enough of it), and restore and maintain it with supplements.
- In the bedroom, keep a comfortable temperature for sleeping (the ideal temperature for sleep is 17-19°C).
- The bedroom must be quiet and dark to facilitate sleep. "I sleep perfectly without curtains" is just as much of a lie as "5 hours are perfectly enough sleep for me", which can only be true unless you go to bed and wake up with the sun and live without artificial light.
- Use your bed only for sleep (and sex). Working in bed creates associations that are not related to calmness and rest.

- Create a sleep routine (e.g., before bed, take a warm bath or shower, try aromatherapy, read, listen to music, do yoga). For example, take a small cup of calming tea at 21:00, turn off the phone, computer, and TV, read a book for 30 minutes, meditate for 30 minutes at 22:30, do some stretching or breathing exercises, and turn the lights off at 23:00.
- Keep your legs and arms warm.
- Before starting your sleep routine, write down the plan for the next day (put it on paper so it wouldn't run circles in your mind).
- Sleep alone, without your significant other, children, or pets. The tradition of sleeping together in one bed came from poverty, when during industrialisation people moved to small apartments in the big cities, rather than love. The bed can also be used for love, but if you really love your significant other (and yourself) – let them sleep without interruptions, such as pulling on bedsheets, snoring, going to the bathroom at night, etc. If this sounds too radical, try buying a mattress that isolates the movements of the person sleeping nearby, sleeping on two different mattresses, or two beds pushed together.

What should we stay away from to sleep well?

- Engaging in active physical activity before bedtime.
- Sleeping during the day (15-30 minutes naps until 15:00 are great, but later or longer naps can cause trouble sleeping at night).
- Engaging in energizing, stimulating (mentally, physically) activity just before bedtime.
- Using caffeine (coffee, tea, etc.) or nicotine in the evening. Caffeine retains 50% of its effects for about 5 hours after consumption (from 1.5 to 9 hours, depending on the person).
- Looking at the clock at night or counting minutes.
- Reading or watching TV in bed, especially before bedtime.
- Lying in bed and trying to fall asleep for more than 20-30 minutes after waking up. Forceful attempts to fall asleep can work the opposite way. Try reading a book until you feel like sleeping again.
- Drinking alcohol, especially, to fall asleep. Alcohol can help you fall asleep or pass out, but this sleep will likely be restless, and you won't feel rested in the morning.
- Going to bed hungry or having overeaten.
- Trying to change the routine for the next day after a night of poor sleep.
- After a night of poor sleep, using more caffeine the next day.

No time for this

or

Plenty of time for myself



Personal
Time

Personal Time

“When you respect your time, others will do the same.”

– Nancy B. Urbach

This “leg” of balance, first and foremost, is about you. About the things, you choose to do because you enjoy them. Not for your employer, significant other, children, or your friends - for you. As the saying goes - “If you don’t plan your life, someone will plan it for you.” This is the time you should plan for yourself and by yourself. This includes sports, hobbies, traveling, and reading, so if this encompasses some of the things you mention in the areas of physical fitness or intellectual activity, that’s even better - in a way, that gives you more than 168 hours for your weekly balance sheet. If you want to open a woodwork studio, that’s great. If you can involve your children in these activities - even better because personal life overlaps with family life here. In the same way, traveling or taking walks in nature together with your family overlap. There are couples and families where people take turns planning vacations. Whoever plans it, chooses what they like doing on holidays because, as is often the case, a compromise can be a solution that doesn’t bring happiness to either side.

Does it also include watching TV and scrolling online? As with any other area that is supposed to help you find more balance, the main question should be whether after spending time in this way, do you feel more energised or just more drained and exhausted?

Everyone is limited by commitments - personal, financial, etc. But it is important to remember that we are each a unique person and since there is no second “me” in the world, no one can tell you how much time and how we should spend it. Hobbies won’t bring much joy if your mind is racing about making ends meet, but in the same way, food in a luxurious restaurant can be tasteless after an exhausting week (or even a month) at work. Sometimes even if you don’t feel the need for personal time or don’t have the time for it, you need to take a step back, distance yourself from all the other activities and commitments, and ask yourself if what you currently have makes you happy? Todd Henry, the author of *The Accidental Creative*, advises to write down everything that runs circles in your head on paper, regardless of whether it’s a work matter or a personal one. So, if you need an hour a week to clear your head of thoughts or fill it with them, take an hour. If you need a full day, take the day. If you don’t spend an hour on yourself now, you may need to spend months or even years on it in the future. When people start meditating, 5 minutes a day is often enough or even too much.

French philosopher Blaise Pascal once said that all human problems stem from a man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone. During one experiment, people locked up alone in a room chose painful electric shock instead of sitting still and quiet for 10 minutes. Even if you don’t know what you’d like to enrich your personal life with, those 10 minutes can be spent writing in a diary (or simply putting your thoughts on paper) or trying to define how you

will become more you in the next month, year, or 5 years. For example, you might want to become someone who knows how to play guitar, understands, or speaks Spanish, knows how to stand on your head, runs your first marathon or half marathon, etc. Taking the time to “do nothing” may seem selfish and irrational, but when you turn over the latest studies on happiness, you will discover that spending time on yourself is not at all senseless.

Where do I start?

Write down what you'd like to do, learn, achieve, and experience. Don't leave it floating around in your head because it will soon drown among other things, and besides, you can (and you should) use the rest of the space on a piece of paper to explore what, when, and how you are going to do to achieve your goals. Maybe you want to spend more time on nutrition, sport, hobbies, sleep - what else?

Reserve time for yourself in your calendar as if it were one of the most important meetings of the week. If you don't book the time, someone else will. What is more important here?

Dare to take the time for yourself. Karl from the Disney/Pixar film *Up* took a solo trip after he had been “late” to a trip with a friend. And what a journey it was! And yet, how many things we don't find the courage to do... We don't go to see a movie because no one wants to go to movies like that together. We don't drink a glass of wonderful wine discovered in a shop because “only alcoholics drink alone”, and we don't travel to our dream country because for our group of friends “this is the last country on earth they would travel to.” Forget all these social norms – be brave, learn to enjoy your own company, and you will never be bored!

Learn to say no. To less pleasant things first and then to those that matter more to others than to you because there won't be enough time for everything anyway. After crossing the initial barrier of saying no, learn to say no to seemingly nice, cute things. Those could be helping friends out, volunteering, and cultivating hundreds of hobbies, which can mean the constant joy of discovery or that you don't really know what you really want to do. Learning to play the guitar or piano and barely managing a sequence of three chords is not the same.

Let others know about your needs. A person devoting time to their personal growth is only a step away from being seen as weird or egotistic. No one should feel guilty about spending time on themselves, wanting to have some alone time, because ultimately, that is... time with the coolest person in the world. But others might see that differently. A couple of an extrovert and an introvert will sooner or later realise that as one of them needs social connections to energise, the other one needs to get away from it to recharge. Just as you don't have to feel bad about taking time for yourself, another person doesn't have to understand you - it would be enough (and it must be) for them to accept you the way you are, with all your quirks and strengths. Make your needs clear and discuss them with those around you. Talk about your needs with your significant other, children, colleagues, or employer. Communicate clearly: "Now I need ... so that I can then ...". We are all human, and all our lives are trade-offs of "a" for "b" and "c" for "d."

Buy time. It is a lie that you cannot buy time. Most people know their hourly or monthly salary rates, but what they do after work mystically becomes free labour. Washing, vacuuming, childcare – everything can be assessed monetarily. Cleaning the house for the entire weekend or staying outdoors or exercising after hiring a housekeeper? Going on a cheaper trip with three transfers, or taking a more expensive but direct flight? Making your own food or ordering takeaway? The answers depend on how much you appreciate your time. Another approach to buying time would be answering these questions: how much money you would want to earn if someone asked you to clean up their homes or make their food? Would that earn you more or less than your job? Would that bring you more or less pleasure than your job? After all, we need money to meet our needs and do something enjoyable. So, if cooking brings you joy, why pay the money for it to others? And if you hate annual tire changes, parking problems, and idiots on the road, why don't you read a magazine on public transport or a taxi?

Adopt the "Please do not disturb" philosophy for your phone, computer, and life. Lock your FOMO (fear of missing out) up in another room for a moment and immerse yourself in gratifying, enjoyable activities with all your mind and heart without worrying about what others think about it. As someone said, "Live your life because the lives of others are already taken."

Have an hour (or more) without the Internet every day. Or a whole day without the Internet. Get away and disconnect. Not that the Internet is evil, but it always carries the risk of drowning you in an endless stream of news and messages.

Reduce information consumption. It's a time-consuming activity that has very few calories for the brain. News will always self-claim to be very important, but could you recall at least one "undoubtedly" important piece of news from yesterday, the day before yesterday, or last week? Give it a definite, limited time. In the morning (if you follow the news from Asia), at lunch, or in the evening. Try to detox for a week and don't watch or read any news. Then, ask yourself if you missed out on anything in the meantime and how you feel about it? Spend the time you saved for yourself.

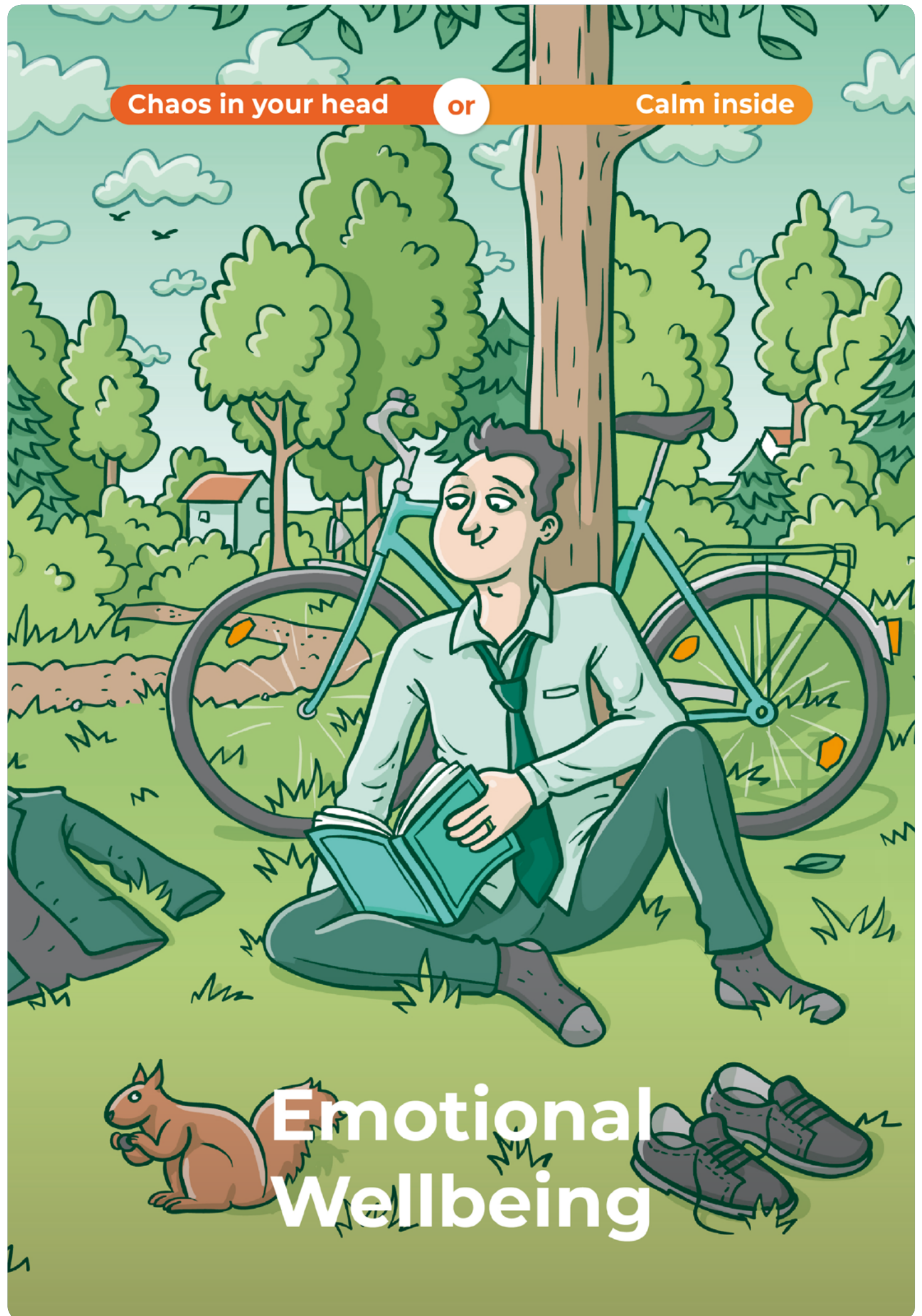
Start your day early. For some, this might seem impossible, but it is worth trying. The time until 8:00, when the avalanche of work letters and expectations begins, is an opportunity for peace and personal time. For some, this may be the time before children get up. In either case, this is the time when no one expects anything from you, and you can do whatever you want – exercise, write, read.

Stop striving for perfection. First, stop buying one book after another about personal development, productivity, etc. Reading about how you can improve won't magically and immediately change your life. People who constantly read self-help books can often give great advice, but they find it a lot harder to follow the tips themselves. When would you find the time to live by the advice, when you still have so many more books lined up to read about self-growth!!! People who do this understand that something needs to change in their lives, but they don't dare start yet. Choose one self-improvement book and live with its advice for a month, maybe 3 or 6 months, perhaps even a year. If it doesn't fit you, you'll soon understand, but at least give it a chance. At the same time, lower the bar in your everyday activities. Unanswered emails, dust, or unwashed dishes won't run away from you; they can wait for you in the morning, after you allow yourself to read a book before bedtime.

Chaos in your head

or

Calm inside



Emotional
Wellbeing

Emotional Wellbeing

"It's up to you today to start making healthy choices. Not choices that are just healthy for your body, but healthy for your mind."

– Steve Maraboli

Good emotional health is the basis of a good work-life balance. You can't leave your feelings at home before you come to work and vice versa – it is hard not to bring important work concerns home. It's not right to think that you must always be happy and feel good. Life is full of emotions of different colours, both good and bad. Don't ignore them. On the contrary, take the time and attention to identify, understand, and accept your emotions and feelings.

Emotional health is part of mental health, defining how we handle positive and negative emotions. Good emotional health does not mean a constant state of happiness. It's each person's ability to accept themselves and function in life: the ability to express themselves, cope with stressful situations, and experience happiness, sadness, and pain.

Women and men may face different emotional challenges when balancing work and life since society still stereotypically expects women to take care of home and children while men are working. Men often feel pressured to earn more once their family grows, so paradoxically, they may feel incentivised to work longer hours than usual, putting them at risk of getting detached from the family, the very thing they made the initial decision for.

How do you notice the first signs of facing challenges in this area? Here are several signals showing that you might want to stop and take care of yourself:

- Loss of concentration: jumping from task to task without completing any of them.
- You make mistakes more often than usual.
- You find it hard to fall asleep or sleep poorly, wake up in the middle of the night with thoughts of work or personal concerns, sleep shorter, wake up earlier, etc.
- You feel a lack of energy, move less, or don't want to move at all.
- You need repeating, such as rereading the text you've already read, because you don't understand what you've just read, or you're more forgetful than usual.
- You get up to do something that is not urgent or necessary and un-related to the task you were just doing.
- You are constantly irritated for no reason, small details get you off-track, and it seems like you have less patience.
- You are overreacting to simple questions and get frustrated over little things. For

example, someone has asked for a small service, and you respond as if they are asking for something impossible.

- You feel detached from other areas of life that usually make you happy and enjoyable: you don't see your friends or family, skip doing sports, abandon your hobbies or other leisure activities, don't have time for yourself, not engaging in intellectual activities, etc.

It's likely you just need a break from what you're doing if:

- You can't stop scrolling on social networks or checking emails.
- You are reading websites that are not work-related.
- You are chatting with friends or colleagues online.
- You are staring aimlessly out a window or at a wall.

IMPORTANT! You are responsible for your health. Mental health, like physical health, can sometimes falter. After all, when your body gets ill, do you seek help from your doctor? Mental health should be taken care of in the same way.

If you are facing challenges that you cannot overcome yourself, consider seeking emotional help from professionals. If you doubt that you really need it - try to talk about it with someone you trust. An external opinion often helps us to assess the situation better.

Where do I start?

Create an environment based on honesty, both at work and at home. An environment that doesn't accommodate your emotional needs and challenges is unhealthy. You can contribute to changing the environment by showing empathy for other people and sharing your feelings. If you're angry, sad, frustrated, or tense, name the emotion, explain to others why you feel that way and what you need in this situation. Maybe it's an extra minute to calm down, a short walk, or a call to another person. You don't have to discuss your state in detail, but a clear statement of what happened to you and what you need right now will help the people around you understand what's going on better and provide what you need at this moment.

Be empathetic to others. If you see a friend, relative, or colleague feeling unwell, ask about it. Don't be afraid to show attention. Practice empathy.

Strengthen psychological resilience. This describes the ability to handle crises (such as the loss of a loved one, failure, betrayal of a loved one, or other painful and traumatic events) and

successfully return to the state you were in before the crisis. This does not protect us from unpleasant emotions but helps us become stronger, deal better with similar situations in the future, and prevent these emotions from causing long-term mental health damage. Take complex situations as an opportunity for personal development by strengthening within yourself qualities such as patience, resilience, control, optimism, etc.

How to find more time?

Have good quality rest. Rest can be active (such as sport, time in nature, hiking, swimming, doing yard or farm work) or passive (such as reading a book, watching a movie, or visiting an exhibition). No matter what kind of rest you choose, it's important not to do the work you're resting from. In a world where, thanks to technology, we're available 24/7, you sometimes need to actively try to disconnect (usually from the technology itself). If you want the rest to bring the maximum benefit, put the effort in.

Disconnect from work-related communications. Turn off your business phone, email, and other work-related communications during rest. Do not reply to messages or calls, and don't write or call colleagues yourself while away from work. Break this rule only in exceptional cases, subject to prior agreement with other persons.

Allow yourself to have pleasant experiences. When it comes to things that bring you joy and satisfaction, don't limit them. Positive emotions and rest give your mind a break from stress and help you take a fresh look at the challenges you might be facing. It doesn't have to be grandiose or fancy; focusing on something you already practice in life, just doing it consciously and with your own permission can be enough. For example:

- Go to a bookstore or a library and take a slow walk, taking the time to look at the books, and pick the right one for yourself.
- Instead of a short shower, take a bath or longer than the usual shower.
- In the evening, take a walk outside, in a park or forest, and listen to an audiobook or your own thoughts.
- Make a cup of delicious tea or coffee and drink it without rushing, taking the time to enjoy it.
- Call a loved one for no specific reason.
- Stand in the sun for 5 minutes.
- Allow yourself a nap after lunch.
- Take 10 minutes to meditate.
- Go home on another, more interesting route, or get off the bus a stop earlier.

Make your personal list of pleasures and regularly add to it. Have it on your phone or on your desk and use it when you feel the need to recharge or prepare for tackling another task.

Replace unpleasant work. If you are constantly in a hurry, cleaning the house or completing another routine task, can cause extra stress. On the other hand, sometimes switching activities can serve as an excellent break for the mind and the body. For example, walking away from your computer and work tasks to wash the dishes. It's not about what you do but about how you do it. If you choose dishwashing as a breather from working on a complex text, it can be an enjoyable and relaxing experience.

Plan a pleasant reward for hard work. When you're planning a difficult, stressful task, plan how you will reward yourself for completing it. It might be something more festive, like a dinner with friends at a beloved restaurant, or simply a planned and clearly defined time to rest - watch a movie with your family, take a bath or read a book.

Use short moments for pleasant experiences. A brief conversation with a stranger on your way to work or in a shop, a 5-minute break in the sun, petting a dog - a similar, short moment can improve your mood for a much longer period. Look for moments like this and enjoy them.

Listen to your negative emotions. All emotions are useful and carry a specific message about what is happening to us and around us in a particular situation. Anger can help us mobilise to react to a certain situation, boredom encourages the search for something new, doubt prompts seeking for new solutions, jealousy, frustration, or loneliness inform us about what we really want, and guilt motivates us to apologise or focus on improving relationships, etc. Learn how to hear them, get to know them, and take advantage of them. Sometimes, just let yourself be angry, upset, or get bored. It's also part of your life that shouldn't be denied or suppressed.

See your loved ones. They are a massive part of maintaining our emotional health. If you find it hard to be spontaneous, plan your time with your loved ones in advance. When the time comes, you will no longer have to decide on the spot whether you should stay at work for longer. With time and age, social ties tend to weaken, and we all become more and more invested in our own routines and everyday lives. If you want to maintain your relationships for years, you have to nurture them and devote your time and attention. You have to plan, initiate meetings or activities together, etc.

Spend some time reflecting every day. One of the daily sources of energy (without food, sleep, rest, etc.) is the time you spend on reflection. You can do this in many ways, including reading, writing a diary, praying, meditating, practicing gratitude, checking your conscience, etc. Without taking time for reflection, we start floating on the surface of everyday activities, succumbing to external factors and circumstances, without taking strength from our values and goals, and losing track of why we need to do what we do. It's particularly easy

for busy people to give in to this because to them it seems like there's no time for reflection. So, if you want to find more time for emotional health, start with making it an everyday practice to reflect on the ideas that matter to you, how you feel, and how you view today's achievements, lessons, and failures. It can be 10 minutes of writing in a diary, noting in a gratitude journal before bed, prayer, or an evening walk - whichever form of reflection you choose, make sure you do it every day.

Doing alone

or

Doing together



Community and Social Connections

Community and Social Connections

“The only way to have a friend is to be one.”

– **alph Waldo Emerson (philosopher, poet)**

This area of life is about you and your relationships with other people. It defines how much time you spend on social life and various community activities. How you define community is relational. It can include a circle of friends, relationships with neighbours, members of a church or religious group, taking part in activities of an organisation or a social group, spending time with friends, etc. – anything that is not family or work. Of course, if you spend your free time with your colleagues after work, they may be part of your community, too.

Friends and good relationships with them contribute to good emotional and physical health, personal growth, good quality rest, strong self-worth, and other positive things in your life. People on their deathbeds are a lot more likely to regret broken ties with friends than unfinished work tasks.

As professional and/or family responsibilities pop up, time spent on social life is generally reduced. Keeping it active often requires additional efforts to stay in touch with friends and community members, initiate meetings, and organise joint activities while also finding the time to accept invitations to meet or attend events from others. Social life creates particularly favourable opportunities to combine various spheres of life – leisure, sport, recreation, and family time. After having children, it may be easier to organise activities or trips with friends who also have children. For example, go camping with several friends' families by the lake (family time + social life + community building + active leisure/sport). Or start exercising or take up a new hobby with your friends. Opportunities are endless!

Where do I start?

Plan the time for social life. Don't expect your social life to flourish effortlessly. Actively plan and reserve time for it in advance on your calendar. Otherwise, other activities will come up and will likely take up the time of your social life.

If you're an active person, it might feel like you don't have time, and you'll meet your friends once you free up from work. A day like this may never come if you don't make an effort to plan something deliberately.

Foster in-person communication. Talking to people in person can lift your mood and fill you with energy like nothing else. Not every person and not every conversation automatically puts you in a better mood, but we all know at least one person who refills us with positive energy and helps us deal with concerns whenever we talk on the phone or meet in person. Try to meet or chat on the phone (it must be a voice conversation rather than a written one) at least once a week with people you find inspiring, motivating, and full of positive energy, those who affect you positively and give you energy and insight.

Include friends in important life events and decisions. Consult, talk things through, share ideas and insights, celebrate achievements, victories, and meaningful moments in your life together – share your life and build a community of loving and supportive people. This is an immense power in your life that can support you in your happy moments and help you go through difficult stages of your life.

Strengthen the community by doing what you like. Think about the activities you want to start or develop, but you never found the time (or were not looking for it) to do so and combine it with your contribution to community-building (even if it is just among your friends and family). Do you like to read? Start your own book club or join an existing one. Would you like to move more? Invite a group of friends on monthly trips to nature (and ask each person to bring one other person). Like cooking? Invite your loved ones to explore a cuisine of a different culture once every two months. The idea is simple: invite other people to do something that you like to do, but you're not doing now. Social commitment to other people will motivate you and strengthen the sense of community (or maybe even create it).

Join community initiatives. If you don't want to commit to something that would take a lot of your time every week or month, you might be able to join one-time or less frequent, e.g., annual, initiatives. For example, a spring clean-up with neighbours in your area, the “Darom” (Eng. “Let's Do It”, <https://www.mesdarom.lt/>) campaign, a Christmas wreath-making workshop, baking a cake for Pie Day on 6 November, etc.

Volunteer. In Lithuania, many organisations host volunteers. It's a great way to contribute to building a better world and boost your social life.

All that is left for you to do is choose where you want to help. Here are some organizations that are always looking for extra hands:

- Raudonasis kryžius (Eng. “Red Cross”). Operates in very different areas (aid to elderly people, refugees, and migrants, people in emergency situations, affected by military conflicts and natural disasters).
- Caritas. Operates in different areas (aid to those affected by war, elderly, people with disabilities, work with families and children, convicts, organising events).
- Maisto bankas (Eng. “Food Bank”)
- Emotional support organisations (calling new volunteers every year):
 - “Pagalbos moterims linija”(Eng. “Women’s Help Line”)
 - “Jaunimo linija” (Eng. the “Youth Line”)
 - “Vaikų linija” (Eng. the “Child Line”)
 - “Sidabrinė linija” (Eng. “The Silver Line”)

More volunteering ideas in Lithuania can be found here.

Get to know local initiatives as well. For example, in your community, your children’s school, university, the church you visit or ask friends, acquaintances, etc. The world is full of opportunities, all you have to do is commit your time and will to it.

Voluntary activities that feel meaningful and are valuable for the community enrich everyone involved with positive emotions and energy. In some countries, volunteering, and other activities for the benefit of the community are very widespread. In the US, for example, residents spend an average of 52 hours a year on various voluntary activities. According to Eurostat, 19% of Europeans are involved in volunteering (16.3% in Lithuania). In Norway, the proportion of volunteers is the highest (48%), and in Romania - the lowest (3.2%).

Nonsense

or

Something new

A cartoon illustration of a man with dark hair and a yellow shirt with black dots, sitting at a sewing machine. He is smiling and looking at a piece of orange fabric he is sewing. The sewing machine is white and sits on a dark grey table. On the table, there are also a pair of orange-handled scissors, a green spool of thread, a ruler, and several buttons. A white cord is plugged into the machine. In the background, there is a green door with a white outline of a person's head and shoulders. To the right, there are shelves filled with various items, including boxes, books, and a stack of fabric. In the foreground, there is a large open cardboard box filled with various items, including a yellow bag, a green bag, and a blue bag. To the right of the box, there is a small table with a yellow measuring tape, a pair of orange-handled scissors, and a small container with a pencil and a ruler.

Intellectual
Activity

Intellectual Activity

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”

– Pablo Picasso

What do we mean by “intellectual activity”? The keywords here are critical thinking, stimulating curiosity, problem-solving, and creativity. The simplest way to evaluate your intellectual side is by asking - am I constantly learning something new? And then -- do the things I learn inspire me, revive me, and move something in me? What intellectual activity is for the brain, physical activity is for the body (during physical activity and exercise, the same brain areas that are responsible for cognitive thinking activate and develop).

The whole point of nurturing every area of your life and keeping a healthy balance is to enable you to counteract temporary issues in other spheres. Reading professional literature before bed is work rather than enjoyable intellectual activity and it will likely fail to help you keep your balance if you lose a customer, your job, or have a fight with your co-workers.

In some ways, we learn something new every day without trying (for example, we notice that if we do X, others will react by doing Y); the question is how consciously do we invest in expanding our horizons, knowledge, talents, and opportunities? You can just go and play tennis in the evenings, or you can purposefully train, watch analyses and lessons online, and read books about different techniques. Alternatively, you can make a kite at home (maybe even with your children), try out curling (in combination with the area of physical wellbeing), or simply read a Wikipedia article on a conflict that is regularly mentioned on the news. And if, after a full day of work, you feel bitter about conflict with your colleagues, perhaps this can be an opportunity to read some psychological literature about personality types?

Finally, apart from the fact that intellectual interests make us more interesting people, more diverse personalities, and professionals, enable us to get our balance back, it also helps us, to some extent, to live longer. You may have already reached the age when you start wondering: why do the years seem to be passing faster as one gets older? One of the answers is the lack of new experiences. When we are children, we learn something new almost every day, and that's how our years go by - the first broken toy, the first-time swimming in the sea, the first pair of shorts, the first bus trip. Let's compare it to: “I get up at 7, have breakfast, then I get to work, I get out of work at 5, go to the store, I come back, I eat, I clean the house, I watch a film, and I fall asleep”. Some repeat this scenario 365 times a year. What if every day you tried to take a different route to work? Get out at the next bus stop and walk down another street? As you go, carefully inspect the balconies of any five-story house and their contents - you will have something to talk to your colleagues about at

lunch. Listen to a podcast while you're walking, in a car, or public transport. But do it actively - don't limit yourself to whatever is on the radio. Try to decide on your own what you would like to learn about today and find information about it.

How to find the time, and where do I start?

Find time. You may be thinking: "It's easy to say....". We each have 24 hours a day, 168 hours a week, and 8,760 hours a year - this is an objective fact of human life; how we use them and who we dedicate them to is an entirely different issue. You can start by auditing your time (by noting in your calendar what you're doing every half hour and installing apps that track how much time you spend on your phone or computer and which apps consume the most of your time). If there is a person you look up to, look for information about how they handle their time. If you know someone who seems to manage everything on their plate on time, ask how they handle it. Everything is a matter of prioritising. If you hope that some time will be left for intellectual activity once everything else is addressed and in order, you will most likely be left with nothing.

Start something new. Come up with it yourself. A new magazine? A recipe? To this day, the author of these lines remembers buying a carton of feijoa compote decades ago in a supermarket. Well, because, why not? Not knowing what it is, is an excellent opportunity to find out. While this is not exactly a lifestyle, intellectual stimulation should be included in the agenda. For example, "I will do/try/read something new every week (or Thursday after work)". Fiction books and artistic films allow you to disconnect from everyday concerns but try watching documentaries about nature or reading a biographical, historical, or scientific book.

Discover podcasts and find time for them (you can find some links in the "Useful Resources" section). You can listen while driving to work, coming home, walking, exercising, cycling, using public transport, on a plane, cleaning at home, or gardening.

Write a diary, secretly or openly, write down your thoughts and attitudes, and learn how to formulate your ideas better than "I am against ..." or "I am pro". Talk and discuss things with yourself. If you can't find the time to understand yourself, how will you find time to understand others? Write either once it's silent (before you go to bed) or when it's still silent (in the early morning). Writing in a diary is both an intellectual activity and an interrupted time just for yourself when nothing else bothers you.

Try reviving a childhood interest - does it still graze somewhere at the corner of your mind, behind the noise of the everyday? Why did you quit it in the first place? Could this be an opportunity to see someone from childhood?

Try fixing a broken appliance or a piece of clothing yourself, even if you can afford to buy a

new one for cheaper. Both your brain and nature will thank you.

Learn a new language. A new language is not just new words, it's a new culture and unexplored perception of the world. Knowing a new language automatically draws you to explore the country where it is spoken (travel!) and its cinema, music, literature, and traditions.

Do crosswords.

Play board games. Chess is nice, but there are also plenty of other board games you can try with your family or a group of friends, thus multiplying your intellectual well-being with that of your family and friends.

Debate, discuss. Meet your friends and talk about something you're interested in, not just the weather. Don't be of the same mind all the time. Choose to defend positions that are truly alien to you and explore what supporters of that position might think and why. Don't forget that whether you're debating with your friends or enemies, jokingly or seriously, respect is always the most important thing. If you feel the need to raise your voice or even fists, you have lost the debate.

Visit a theatre, museum, exhibition, new restaurant, or poetry evening. Go with your friends or loved ones. Agree upon taking turns organising these outings - once you've organised a cultural activity to your liking, pass the honours to someone else.

Move team-building activities to unusual locations - **yoga studios, museums, galleries, and** massage studios and ask someone to be your teacher or guru of new experiences.

Enrol in a course that has nothing to do with your professional activity. Visit a seminar or conference.

Read for your pleasure. Sometimes it's hard to start or come back from the reading world, so be smart and start slowly. Choose a book of manageable size. Each time you seem to have no time for a book, tell yourself: "Two minutes, only two minutes" (everyone can find 2 minutes). If in two minutes you feel like you're done - that is okay, you can be done. When starting something new, it's important to make it a part of your routine (in the best way possible), a habit. New practices develop when they are repeated multiple times. Today it may be 2 minutes, tomorrow it may be 10 minutes, and a year later... The most important thing is to discover the pleasure of reading, both to learn something new and as an opportunity to get away from things that run circles in your mind and stop you from relaxing.

Check with a world

or

Check with yourself



Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality and Religion

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”*

– Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (scientist, theologist)

Spirituality has been inseparable from religion for a long time, but now it encompasses everything from personal worldview to esoteric or religious traditions. Even those who are not (or think they are not) spiritual, usually have their own opinions about it. When we learn about people who are spiritual, religious, atheist, or “not interested in all of this nonsense”, do we assign the same qualities to all of them? Or do we see some of them as conservative, others - as curious and bizarre, some cynical, and others - as dull and uninteresting? Which ones would we like to be? How would we like to be seen?

There are many definitions of spirituality (if you have one of your own, keep it in mind when you compute your personal formula), but here let us define it as a system of inner beliefs and values that transcends the relatively limited and self-centred perception of the world, helping us comprehend this world and our place in it more broadly. Some may practice this through religion and prayer, others - through meditation, and for someone else, it may be connecting with nature.

According to research, spiritual individuals are optimistic, feel more supported, and experience more inner meaning, strength, and peace of life (whether this correlation is also a causal link remains unclear) but as David J. McNeff, the author of *The Work-Life Balance Myth*, observes, they have another considerable advantage: faith. The belief is that, despite failures, disruptions, disasters, and interferences, they will be able to return to normal life and achieve their goals – everything will be fine sooner or later, and all it takes is time.

People are spiritual or religious for different reasons. Some grew up in a religious environment and continued practicing into their adult years. For others, spirituality comes after major life events, such as finding out that they have a severe illness or when someone close to them dies. Others (and this is typical of a modern, super busy human being) spiritual quests begin when they fail to find joy and meaning in what they do every day. The work they once found enjoyable may lose its purpose in the face of harsh criticism, love, and relationships - after breaking up or getting a divorce, and the constant consumption of things - when they notice that as the number of purchases increases, happiness does not. Spirituality and religiosity are areas without rivalry or condemnation. Inner peace comes from being able to explain to yourself why the world is as it is and why things happen the way they do. What is your philosophy of life, what do you believe in, and what is right or wrong? These questions can only be answered when you stop and spend time with yourself. In most cases, a person stops and changes something drastically when they are close to breaking point, but you can take preventive measures and uncover this area of your life before.

How to find the time, and where do I start?

Start with silence and time for yourself.

Disconnect from the outside world, from showing off, comparing yourself to others, and rivalry, from the never-ending stream of news, films, videos, emails, and messages.

Explore different religions and spiritual practices. Choose a book about religion, its characters, faith, and spirituality. If this is completely new to you, consider going to a church or monastery, and talking to the clergy and its followers. Keep in mind that religion and faith are often not the same as the actions and behaviour of the institutions that represent them (such as financial or sexual misconduct). Look for information online on what your religion or their representative institutions and individuals say about topics and issues that are relevant to you.

Devote your time to practicing religion and spirituality. Depending on the religion practiced, dedicate time to visit a church, mosque, synagogue, or a house of worship once a week. Celebrate important celebrations of the year, perform rituals and other spiritual practices.

Find the time for daily prayer or a moment of focus.

Practice self-awareness. Perform a daily practice of conscience accounting (a brief review of yourself, your work, thoughts, and feelings, assessing how Christian principles of life reflect in your daily life) and personal prayer, or practice of gratitude⁵ (naming what I am grateful for today, what lessons can I take from today) or any other form of reflection about the day (writing in a diary, walking outside, etc.), during which you would honestly assess your actions and behaviour with yourself and other people, and reflect on how you reacted to different situations.

Try meditating. Even 5 minutes a day, but every day. Start with shorter sessions and gradually increase the time. Plenty of apps can help you learn and guide you through this process (you will find several recommendations in the resources section).

Try yoga. Learning to put your foot behind your head is not the objective here. Yoga is a way to feel the harmony between your body and soul and to learn how to listen to and feel your body. Learn more about the philosophy of yoga, not just the asanas.

Go on a spiritual journey. Go to a meditation camp in Lithuania, India, or any other part of the world. Complete a pilgrimage route (for example, Camino de Santiago in Spain or Lithuania), and participate in spiritual exercise retreats (their goals, duration, and location vary, so you should ask the church you visit about possible opportunities), a yoga camp, etc.

⁵ More on gratitude practices: <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-gratitude-practice#methods>.

House chores

or

Quality time



Home and Housework

Home and Housework

“Remember, the reason to clear clutter is because, somehow, that clutter is diminishing your happiness.”

– Gretchen Rubin, „Outer Order, Inner Calm“

When we talk about housework, we mean all the time we spend on housekeeping, washing, cooking, gardening, buying food, clothing, and other goods, solving domestic issues, shovelling snow, repairing cars or other devices, purchasing services (internet, mobile, repairs, insurance, etc.), payment of taxes, etc.

Our households are full of things to take care of every day (cooking, cleaning, washing, caring for pets) and full of just as important non-routine tasks – management of unplanned events (caring for sick family members, death of relatives, repairs, moving, organisation and management of various home-related services, repair of faulty items, etc.). It is normal that these things take a lot of our time that we would rather spend on more pleasant things, like sports, recreation, extra work, etc. Keeping this area of life in control takes good coordination and planning skills, creativity, flexibility, and equal involvement of people who are building the household together.

How to find more time?

Organise and plan. Manage your household efficiently. We often spend a lot of time doing various domestic tasks that we could automate, share with other family members, or organise more effectively. For example, you might occasionally hire external help (e.g., several times a year hiring a cleaner to tidy up the entire house, clean windows, etc.), buy a dishwasher instead of washing dishes by hand (if in your home it's truly a big problem that consumes a lot of your time, this investment may pay off much faster than you might think), or other appliances that make it easier for your household. You'll be able to spend the time you save on things you really love, quality communication with people close to you, more rest, or other activities.

Look for time-saving solutions. Sometimes, instead of cooking at home, you can order dinner or eat out (two birds with one stone - quality time with your family and a break from cooking at home), instead of going to the store – shopping online, instead of cleaning the house daily – devoting more time to it over the weekend, etc.

Buy food less often for a longer period. Choose a specific time in the week that you will dedicate to shopping. Then, shop for the whole upcoming week. Do you want to save even more time? Get groceries delivered to your house or buy online and pick up the order at the store once it's ready (several of the main grocery stores in Lithuania provide this service).

Include all members of the household. Share housekeeping responsibilities with other family members equally. Each one must contribute. Try making a clear timetable of who is responsible for what and when and follow it. This will make it easier to see the distribution of responsibilities and create less ambiguity about who should do what.

Be creative. There are plenty of tricks to save time on housekeeping. Maybe you can cook more food and freeze some of it for days when you don't have time to cook. Go to the grocery store with a shopping list. Mobilise the entire household for a 15-minute "public management session" when everyone devotes 15 minutes only to housekeeping (washing the dishes, cleaning surfaces, putting things away, etc.). When you order take-out, order extra food for tomorrow's lunch. The potential for clever solutions is endless!

Be more lenient towards mess. Nothing horrible will happen if, from time to time, you allow yourself not to clean your home, leave your dishes unwashed, or do laundry the next day. It's much more important that you have time for quality communication with family, recreation, and activities that enrich your life and recharge your energy. If that means that you will sit on a sofa with a book instead of cleaning, do it - it won't be the end of the world.

Sharing household responsibilities

If you live with your significant other, family, or children – sharing household responsibilities is a must. If you want a better work-life balance, housekeeping should be the responsibility of both partners and other adult family members. Children should also contribute to household chores.

According to the data of the European Institute for Gender Equality, women and men share family care and housekeeping work very unevenly in Lithuania: 41% of women and only 24% of men spend time every day caring for children, grandchildren, elderly, or disabled family members. As many as 79% of women and only 29% of men make food and do other household chores every day.

Our beliefs and social expectations are the principal causes of this. Usually, it is women who deal with housekeeping, raising children, and caring for elderly, sick, or disabled relatives, as it has traditionally always been considered a "female" job. In today's world, there are few families with only one partner/parent working. In most couples, both people work full-time because the family needs both incomes. However, studies show that when a relative needs constant, long-term care, women bear this responsibility more often and tend to downsize

their working hours or even leave work altogether, thus sacrificing their professional commitments and career opportunities.

If you want to achieve an equal division of household responsibilities within your family, it will likely require a lot of patience and consistent work from everyone involved.

Some tips that may help:

Start by making invisible work visible. Often, women's work at home after hours of paid work is called "invisible work" precisely because people are reluctant to see it as actual work. In scientific literature, this is referred to as the "second shift" because, in terms of volume and responsibility, it is equivalent to the amount of time people spend in paid work. If you want the attitude towards housework to change in your family, start recording housekeeping tasks completed by you and your family members. Make a list of all the tasks in your household and share it with your partner. It will be a great way to start a conversation about the division of household responsibilities. To make the distribution more equal, for some time try writing down how much time you each spend on specific tasks: shopping, cooking, taking children to and bringing them back from school/extracurricular activities, washing, cleaning, caring for family members, and other necessary daily work. You can also use mobile applications to do this. If you notice that the division is unequal, discuss it and try to distribute housework better for the following week.

Share the work fairly. It's impossible to share everything equally, but it's important to be conscious about who spends how much time and energy on housework. During certain phases in life, you might need to help your significant other by freeing them from their usual responsibilities. In times like this, it's normal for someone in a couple to take the lead and bear more responsibility in household management and maintenance. This must be discussed and agreed upon in advance, not left to run its own course or follow the traditional division of labour by gender.

If your children are of different sexes, pay attention to what housework your sons and daughters contribute. Don't divide chores by the sex of your children. When this is not deliberately re-thought, girls usually perform more chores, and boys are not even taught how to do certain tasks such as doing laundry, cooking, and ironing clothes. Let your children learn different skills - believe me, it will really come in useful!

Discuss the work for the upcoming week in advance. With your partner, create a habit of discussing the housework and the schedule for the coming week every week. It would be best to write it down on a piece of paper and hang it in a place that is visible to everyone (or buy a board specifically for this purpose and hang it in your house). This way you'll see how long each task takes, be able to plan, decide who will take care of what, and assess whether you share housework equally. Plan and work as a team.

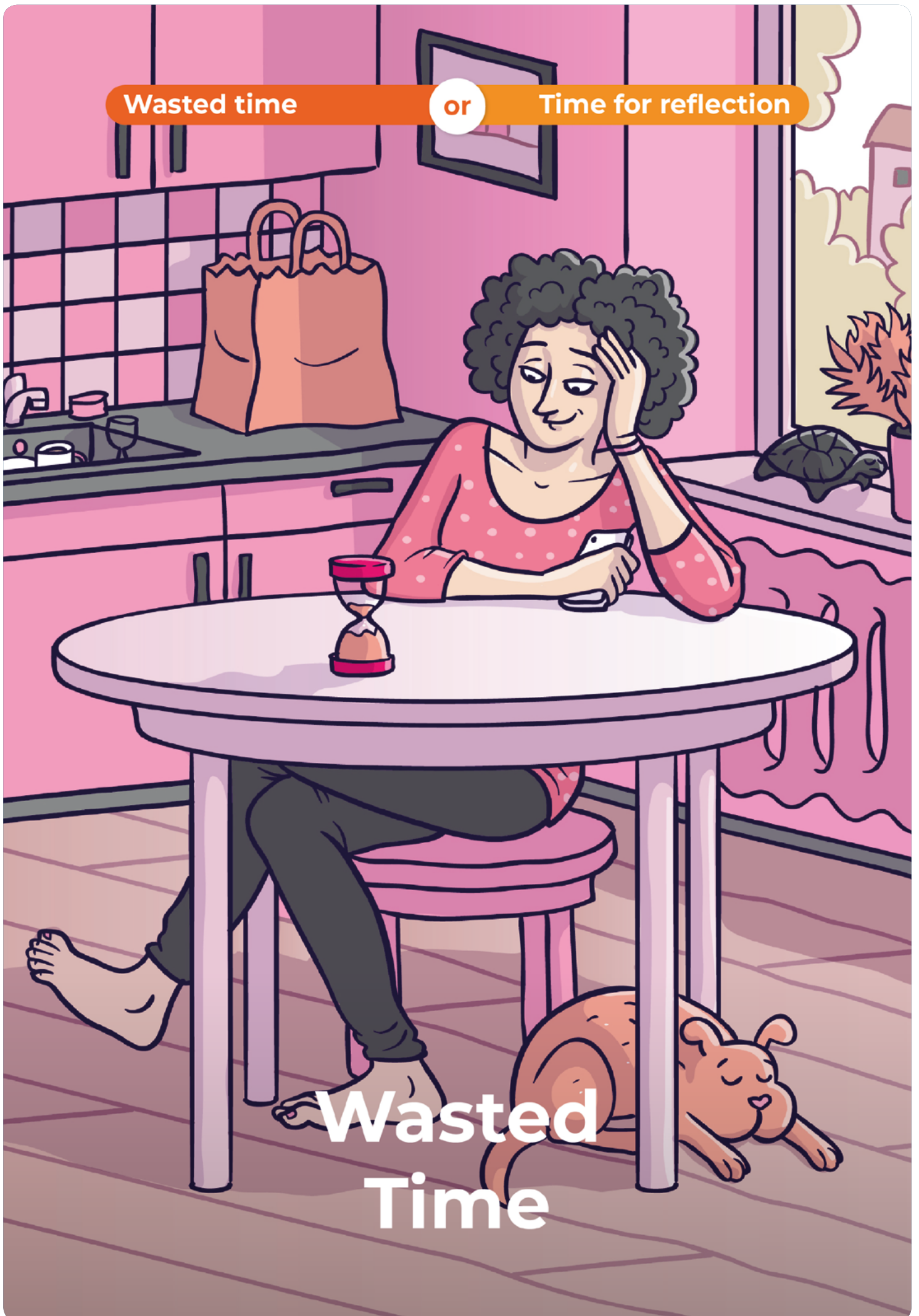
Be attentive. Since society's perceptions that childcare and homework are the woman's responsibility seeps into our personal lives, it is essential to notice and change this in everyday practices. This is possible only by working in two directions: men need to get more involved and take on more responsibilities and day-to-day work at home; women need to encourage and allow this without micromanaging how the work is to be done. Support each other in this process.

Respect each other's time and treat it as equally important. Both to each other and to the whole family. For example, just because one of you works a full-time, paid job and the other spends more or even all their time raising children does not mean that the employed person should not be involved in housework. Your time spent with your family is valuable in and of itself, and so it must be shared fairly.

Wasted time

or

Time for reflection



Wasted
Time

Wasted Time

“My favourite things in life don’t cost any money.

It’s really clear that the most precious resource we all have is time.”

– Steve Jobs

Wasted time is those unconsciously spent minutes scrolling through Instagram or the never-ending stream of news. The time you spend with the friends you don’t really want to meet, but you still do it every week since your university days... Time spent in traffic on the way to and from work, when all you do is listen to music or news for an hour. It’s that half-hour in bed when instead of hopping on a yoga mat and doing exercise, all you exercise is your thumb running through the phone screen. It’s the fifth episode of the series that just launched when you’ve already forgotten why you turned on the first one and the third news broadcast in the last two hours. How many of these unconscious minutes could turn into reading pages of the book every day, trying new recipes, listening to podcasts, meeting with friends (having finished work earlier), or time with family? How many minutes and even hours in the day do you want to get back? Those that you realise have been wasted?

When it comes to wasted time, the keyword is “unconsciously”. Sometimes you really need to allow your thoughts to wander. It’s necessary and recommended. Still, the vast majority of our “wandering” is someone else cleverly planning our time for us. Do you want to read the news online? Plan a half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening for it-- you’re not a news presenter, and you don’t need to know everything all the time. Do you want to scroll online? That’s great. Plan the time for this. Do you want to hang out in bed and chat on your phone in the mornings instead of exercising? If this is your consciously premeditated plan and not your surrender to technological weakness - that’s great too. It means you really need it. If you plan this time in advance and put it in separate time blocks in your schedule, you can save several hours a week. And be sure that news and social media will still be there after you take some time to focus on other areas of your life.

All the books on habits and changing your life included in the resources section deal with the topic of wasted time. In addition, we want to mention two cardinal different books: *Deep Work. Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* by Cal Newport and *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere* by Pico Iyer. No matter how many good books you read about productivity, don’t forget that you are not a robot defined by its capacity for work. You are a human being whose life is defined by creating value in your professional and personal life.

How to find the time, and where do I start?

Don't be surprised to find tips and hints relating to all the areas of life, because we waste our precious time everywhere - at work, with our families, or in other activities. We do many things out of inertia, habit, and automatism because other people do it, and only by stopping and auditing our daily schedules can we see how much time we are wasting and how much we could use better or differently. Some changes could help you become more productive or help you find more time for family or relationships in general, but others could turn things upside down so cardinally that you may want to change your job or even decide to break up with your significant other.

Get your life in order, get your priorities straight, and get your passion back (for work, having fun, etc.). Even if most of the time a modern man wastes could be attributed to technology and social networks, at the end of the day, these are just consequences of the fact that what we do does not bring us joy or that who we are is not enjoyable in and of itself. You must be able to recall a day in your life when you were doing something that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called "flow". It is a state of being so passionately immersed in an activity that the world around you seems to cease to exist. When you're in the "flow" it doesn't matter if you have unread messages, you don't have to check the news every hour, and you certainly don't want to watch Home Alone for the fifth time simply because it's on.

Try to calculate how many of your working hours are truly productive and concentrate not on the work itself but on the result. Some studies show that those who work 60 hours get no more work done than those who work 30 hours. Exhausted workers work longer, are less creative, and have to correct the mistakes they leave behind more often.

Beat the email monster. You could write a whole book on how to do this, but Cal Newport has already done it, so if you're curious, we recommend reading *Digital Minimalism, A World Without Email*, and *Deep Work. Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. One of the most unexpected ideas on achieving this is that "the less you email, the less you receive" (and vice versa). Every "Yes", "No", "I remembered" or "I forgot to mention" is one extra email that requires a reply and your attention to that reply.

Audit your digital life and technologies. Web browsers, operating systems, and phones can all be equipped with apps that give you a clear and visual indication of how much time and what you spend your time on. One minute on Facebook in the morning, then a little while in the afternoon and a bit over the coffee break may not seem like much, but when you add it all up, you may find out that you've scrolled for an hour and a half.

Set boundaries. In the same way, as there are apps that tell you what you're doing and how much time you're spending on your phone or computer, there are apps that allow you to limit the availability of apps and web pages after a certain time. Or email... In some countries, sending work emails outside working hours is prohibited by the law. On Friday afternoon, it might feel nice to shake off the last tasks of the week, but it might stress out the recipient

for the entire weekend. Don't forget that email programmes allow you to schedule your emails to be sent out at a time of your choice.

Have a plan for the day, prioritise your work and allocate your energy appropriately. "There is a lot to do" is not a plan for the day. Write down the day's tasks on paper. Start with the most important ones that must be done and the ones that must be finished before starting anything else. These are the "burning" tasks that require the most intellectual effort (which tends to run out towards the evening). "Yes" and "no" emails can be sent towards the end of the day when you have less energy.

Learn to say no. First to the things that are important to others but not to you, and later to those important to you. Yes, there is so much you want to do, so much you want to achieve, but... you can't try everything, you can't travel all over the world, you can't watch all the films, and you can't learn to play all the instruments. What is the joy of being in Spain if you are already planning the next trip to Italy (your body may be in Spain, but your mind is already in Italy) or thinking about a book in the middle of reading another book? Enjoy this moment 100%, scrap any extra plans that may come in the way of being present, and save some space for reflection, for savouring the moments. Come back from your trip a day before you go back to work - yes, you won't get to see a fountain or two, but at least you'll have time to enjoy and remember the ones you did see. You don't have to be a productivity guru to know that you need to set priorities in your life (not only at work but also in your personal life). But keep in mind that "priority" was originally a singular noun; the plural form "priorities" only came about because of the inability to identify one priority and the attempt to have everything at once.

Disconnect. Turn off your phone and notifications. If that is not possible, let everyone know that for a certain period you will be immersed in tasks that require maximum concentration. Have an hour of "deep work" every day when all your co-workers and partners know you can't be interrupted. Once a month, disconnect for the whole day. Try disconnecting during the weekend first when work wouldn't be as affected. Cal Newport suggests trying month-long digital detoxification and slowly reintroducing the things you still need afterward. Finally, just leave your phone in another room when working or sleeping. Nothing terrible will happen. 99.99999% guarantee.

Create obstacles to wasting time. For example, every time you use social networks, sign out (and do not save the password), so you would have to enter your login name and password again to sign in next time. It won't be a problem if you really need to use the network, but many times having to log in again will prevent you from logging in at all.

Set deadlines for work. Not having such boundaries is a great opportunity not to focus on your tasks because you still have time to complete them.

Read a book about changing habits and try to apply its advice to your life. You don't need to read many books about changing habits as if reading them would automatically change those habits. If you've completed a book, it means you found it interesting and relevant enough, so just work on implementing those tips. At least for a month.

Do everything at the best time for you. We are each a unique individual, and we can each discover for ourselves if we work better (and faster) in the morning or evening, if we have more strength and desire to work out right after waking up or after a long working day, etc. For starting, read *When: the scientific secrets of perfect timing* by Daniel H. Pink and *The Power of When* by Michael Breus, Ph.D.

What's next?

Now that you have tried the formula, experimented with your time distribution, and perhaps discovered the areas you would like to focus on in the nearest future to improve your quality of life, the question is - what's next? How do you move from ideas and good intentions to concrete actions and tangible changes?

First, we recommend starting with an audit of your time and activities. We do many things out of inertia, habit, and automatism because other people do it, and only by stopping and auditing our daily schedules can we see how much time we are wasting and how much we could use better or differently.

Secondly, we invite you to follow the practical advice, "How to find more time?", which we have given in the description of each area of life. Start with small things and slight changes. Choose one area that you want to start with. Don't rush to initiate many changes at once because, after the initial enthusiasm, you just won't get it all done, and you're likely to quit soon after. So, we recommend that you pick one set of tips that feel the closest to you, or go to the "Useful Resources" section, pick one book and dwell on it for at least a month: try it out, experiment, initiate changes, and small adjustments to your behaviour, live with it and see how it works for you, how things change, whether they improve, etc. It may seem strange or uncomfortable at first and require extra effort. This is normal. All innovations take a little time.

Thirdly, if you really want and are ready to change something in your life to bring more balance, we recommend that you start planning your time very diligently and concretely. And even more importantly, plan your energy and how you will store/recover it.

This simple weekly template is a good start⁶

⁶ You can download the template here: <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/formule/formule-naudingos-nuorodos/>.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00							
17:00							
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							
23:00							
0:00							

Print it out and start filling it in with the activities you would like to find more time for. Ideally, you should spend at least four weeks on one new “leg” of your balance, so that the change would have at least a minimal chance of becoming a habit (1-6 months is recommended, depending on the intensity of the activity, i.e., if it’s daily or monthly). If you think you can introduce (and/or take out) several new activities at the same time, try it. Then put other activities and existing commitments around them. First, put things like sleep, main work tasks, important meetings (work and personal), time with family, other social and work commitments, and time for yourself (hobbies, reflection, walks in nature, etc.). Remember to set aside a specific time for the things that matter to you the most. This includes relationships with people you care about, taking care of yourself, and work projects (professional achievements) of the highest value - things you should not negotiate with anyone or anything.

Finally, if you see that something has gone wrong in the first week, adjust the calendar for the second week accordingly. If something doesn’t work immediately, it doesn’t mean that you can’t do it, that it’s not for you, or that you’re good for nothing. It means that our current habits and routines didn’t form in a week or a month, and it will take time to change them.

Useful Resources

On work-life balance

Web page www.daugiaubalanzo.it is for employees, employers, and everyone who wants to improve their work-life balance or to foster an environment friendly to work-life balance both at the workplace and at home.

Work-Life Balance Formula: <https://daugiaubalanzo.it/formule/>. An interactive tool to measure how balanced your life is and show which areas of your life need the most attention and time.

Books

[Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones](#) (James Clear, 2019). “If you’re having trouble changing your habits, the problem isn’t you. The problem is your system. Bad habits repeat themselves again and again not because you don’t want to change, but because you have the wrong system for change. You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems. Here, you’ll get a proven system that can take you to new heights.” The book will also give your life better structure and make more time for the things you want to have more of.

[The Work-Life Balance Myth](#) (David J. McNeff, 2021). We all have seven slices to our lives: family, professional sphere, personal life, physical fitness, intellectual activity, emotions, and spirituality. All of these are equally important when addressing balance and inner harmony in our lives. The author gives advice on finding this harmony by reviewing each of the slices separately and analysing examples from his clients’ lives. David J. McNeff also provides practical tips on listening to your personal needs, reducing stress, and overcoming work-life balance challenges.

[Work-Life Balance](#) (Harvard Business Review Guides, 2019). A collection of articles and essays on work-life balance. It encompasses topics such as time management habits and techniques, setting boundaries between different areas of life, learning to not work overtime and respect your time for rest, using flexible work forms and other measures, strengthening social bonds with your loved ones, self-care, and taking time for yourself.

[Win at Work and Succeed at Life: 5 Principles to Free Yourself from the Cult of Overwork](#) (Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller, 2021). The authors give 5 principles to achieving work-life balance without stress. Their findings are backed by scholarly research from organizational science and psychology and illustrated with case studies from their

clients' lives. In the book, Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller discuss how to avoid burn-out and exhaustion, rethink work and productivity, and slow down and reclaim a fulfilled life.

[Time to Breathe: Navigating Life and Work for Energy, Success and Happiness](#) (Dr Bill Mitchell, 2020). This book presents practical tips and ideas from Dr Bill Mitchell's clinical experience as a psychologist in getting people their energy, balance, and fulfilment back, promoting a more balanced mindset when thinking about themselves. The author teaches how to prevent burnout and maintain emotional health.

[Make Time. How to Focus on What Matters Every Day](#) (Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky, 2018). A book without grandiose theories but with many practical tips and tricks that can help you manage your time and energy better. The whole book is a long list of tips. All you have to do is choose the ones that suit you the best and apply them to your everyday life.

[Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life](#) (Steward D. Friedman, 2014). The author of the book presents work-life balance as complementarity between different spheres of life with four main areas: work, home, time for yourself, and community. In the book, you will find plenty of practical tips on balancing and combining them all to lead a fulfilled life.

WORK

Books

[Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time](#) (Brian Tracy, 2017). A book on time management and prioritising. How to complete the tasks that bring the most value in the shortest amount of time.

[Daily Rituals: How Artists Work](#) (Mason Currey, 2020). This book is about the different strategies of famous people to overcome obstacles to productive work and creativity.

[Free to Focus. A Total Productivity System to Achieve More by Doing Less](#) (Michael Hyatt, 2019). Everyone has 168 hours a week. What we choose to do with this time is up to us. The author of the book presents a system that allows you to focus on effective work in an area of life that matters to you and find more time for health, relationships, and rest. In the book, you will find tips on creating a work routine, focusing on the most important tasks and professional commitments, cutting out non-essential tasks, setting clear boundaries between work and non-work, distributing time and energy effectively, and maintaining productivity.

[The Fix. Overcome the Invisible Barriers That Are Holding Women Back at Work](#) (Michelle P. King, 2020). This book discusses gender inequality in the workplace and the creation of an environment friendly to equalising the work of women and men. The author reviews the different stages of women's careers and gives advice on recognising gender inequality and combatting it.

Others

“The Fix with Michelle King”. A weekly podcast where guests share stories about promoting equality in the workplace and beyond. The show is hosted by world-renowned gender equality expert Michelle King and labour law expert Kelly Thomson who discuss research, personal insights, and tips on striving for equality every day.

FAMILY

Workparent: The Complete Guide to Succeeding on the Job, Staying True to Yourself, and Raising Happy Kids (Daisy Dowling, 2021). A detailed study on balancing parenthood and work encompassing every stage of child development (including pregnancy) and career stages. A very practical and far-reaching book that deals with topics such as proper use of resources available (external help, time, finances), adopting flexible work arrangements, talking to children about work, meeting children’s needs while working, taking care of your own needs (health, nutrition, energy, and emotions), raising children as a single parent, sharing childcare with your partner, etc. This is probably one of the best books out there on family-work balance.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

Books

The Body: A Guide for Occupants (Bill Bryson, 2020). This book offers a detailed and thorough investigation of each part of the human body as if it was an unknown continent. The author provides scientific facts about our organs and how they work, bacteria and microbes, brain function and sense of smell, how the body works, and sometimes even heals itself. “The Body” is a remarkable guide to our own selves that captivates and leaves you in awe and, at the same time, makes you laugh at the human attempts to figure ourselves out.

How Not to Die (Michael Greger, 2015). In this science-based book, Michael Greger examines the leading cause of death in the United States (which are very similar to those of Lithuania) and investigates their relation to diet. The second part of the book presents practical nutrition advice that leads to living longer and healthier.

How Not to Diet (Michael Greger, 2019). The second book by Michael Greger is about the impact of nutrition on our bodies and the effectiveness of the most popular diets nowadays (diets as in dietary regimes, not a restrictive way to lose weight).

Move Your DNA: Restore Your Health Through Natural Movement (Katy Bowman, 2017). A book about the benefits of movement. When a person moves, it is not only their body that moves: every single cell in their body moves. Each movement uniquely affects our cells; thus, it is important to diversify movement. Nowadays, people move less, which harms

healthy body functions. The book provides a list of corrective exercises that will help you move the areas of the body that don't usually move and a list of tips to change your lifestyle and start moving more (especially for those who don't want to exercise).

Others

HARVARD T.H. Chan School of Public Health Healthy Eating Pyramid: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-pyramid/>

The website of Dr Michael Greger, the author of How Not to Die and How Not to Diet: <https://nutritionfacts.org/>. Here, you will find everything about a healthy diet, different food products, and their effects on your body as well as your physical and emotional health.

SLEEP

Why We Sleep (Matthew Walker, 2020). Neuroscientist and sleep expert Matthew Walker provides a revolutionary exploration of sleep, examining how it affects every aspect of our physical and mental well-being. Charting the most cutting-edge scientific breakthroughs, and marshalling his decades of research and clinical practice, Walker explains how we can harness sleep to improve learning, mood, and energy levels, regulate hormones, prevent cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes, slow the effects of aging, and increase longevity. He also provides actionable steps towards getting a better night's sleep every night.

PERSONAL TIME

Books

Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 2021). Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's investigations of "optimal experience" have revealed that what makes an experience genuinely satisfying is a state of consciousness called flow. During flow, people typically experience deep enjoyment, creativity, and a total involvement with life. Csikszentmihalyi demonstrates the ways this positive state can be controlled, not just left to chance. Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience teaches how, by ordering the information that enters our consciousness, we can discover true happiness, unlock our potential, and greatly improve the quality of our lives.

Finding Your Element: How to Discover Your Talents and Passions and Transform Your Life (Ken Robinson, Lou Aronica, 2018). Our heads are filled to the brim with questions about finding our true calling. If you have unrealised dreams, you are haunted by questions of self-growth, or you don't feel happy, this book will help you take the first steps towards a better life. The author of the book, Ken Robinson, invites you to look at your skills and qualities

anew. This book is a practical guide filled with advice that will help you to get to know yourself, understand your own leanings and those of others.

[The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything](#) (Ken Robinson, 2019). The element is the point at which natural talent meets personal passion. When people arrive at the element, they feel most themselves and most inspired and achieve at their highest levels. With a sense of humour, Ken Robinson looks at the conditions that enable us to find ourselves in the element and those that stifle that possibility. He shows that age and occupation are no barrier, and proves that with stories of Paul McCartney, Matt Groening, Richard Branson, Arianna Huffington, Bart Conner, and others.

[Time Smart: How to Reclaim Your Time and Live a Happier Life](#) (Ashley Whillans, 2020). Four out of five adults report having too much to do and not enough time to do it. These time-poor people experience less joy each day. They laugh less. They are less healthy, less productive, and more likely to divorce. In one study, time stress produced a stronger negative effect on happiness than unemployment. How can we escape the time traps that make us feel this way and keep us from living our best lives? The techniques Whillans provides will free up seconds, minutes, and hours that, over the long term, become weeks and months that you can reinvest in positive, healthy activities.

[Better Than Before: Mastering the Habits of Our Everyday Lives](#) (Gretchen Rubin, 2016). Habits are the invisible architecture of everyday life. It takes work to make a habit, but once that habit is set, we can harness the energy of habits to build happier, stronger, more productive lives. If the book “Atomic Habits” is the No. 1 recommendation in the topic of changing habits, this book by Gretchen Rubin is for those who try applying the advice for the media and magazines and nothing seems to work. The author describes four personality types, each of which needs a different approach to turn changes into habits.

Others

<https://www.ted.com/>, whose slogan reads “Ideas worth spreading”, update their library with new speakers and topics regularly.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Books

[The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#) (Bessel Van der Kolk, 2020). Renowned trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he transforms our understanding of traumatic stress, revealing how it literally rearranges the brain’s wiring—specifically areas dedicated to pleasure, engagement, control, and trust. He shows how these areas can be reactivated through innovative treatments including neurofeedback, mindfulness techniques, play, yoga, and other therapies. Based on Dr van der Kolk’s own research and

that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* shows the power of human relationships that can both harm and heal and gives new hope to reclaim lives.

First, We Make the Beast Beautiful: A New Journey Through Anxiety (Sarah Wilson, 2019). Wilson offers readers comfort, humour, companionship, and practical tips for living with the Beast:

- Cultivate a “gratitude ritual.” You can’t be grateful and anxious at the same time.
- Eat to curb anxiety. Real food is your best friend.
- Just breathe. Embrace the healing power of meditation.
- Make your bed. Every day. Simple outer order creates inner calm.
- Study fellow fretters to know thyself. Emily Dickinson, Charles Darwin, and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. all struggled with anxiety.
- Actively practice missing out. Forget FOMO, curl up on the couch, and order takeout.

Practical and poetic, wise and funny, *First, We Make the Beast Beautiful* is a small book with a big heart. It will encourage the myriad souls who dance with this condition to embrace it as a part of who they are, and to explore the possibilities it offers for a richer, fuller life.

The Healthy Mind Toolkit. (Alice Boyes, PhD., 2018). Dr Alice Boyes presents simple, practical solutions that will help you identify self-sabotaging behaviours and change them so that instead of limiting yourself you would be free to live the way you really want to live. Combining scholarly research with cognitive behavioural therapy methods, the author discusses different self-sabotage strategies and gives advice on strengthening positive personality traits, finding creative solutions to defective behavioural patterns, and practicing self-care.

Emotional First Aid (Guy Winch, PhD., 2013). We all have emotional wounds. Failure, guilt, rejection, losses – all these are intrinsic parts of life. How can we help ourselves when faced with challenges? The author suggests preparing an emotional first-aid kit and presents strategies and practices that can help us overcome hardships and negative emotions.

Joyful (Ingrid Fetell Lee, 2018). This book talks about searching for inner joy by noticing the little things that impact our moods a lot. The author examines why some things stress us out or make us competitive while others spark joy, happiness, acceptance, and pleasure.

Others

“Krizių įveikimo centras” (Eng. “Centre for Overcoming Crises”): <https://krizesiveikimas.lt/>

On enjoying the little moments: <https://ideas.ted.com/whats-a-delightful-way-to-get-more-time-out-of-the-day-savoring/>

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Books

Together: Why Social Connection Holds the Key to Better Health, Higher Performance, and Greater Happiness (Vivek H. Murthy, 2020). A book about the positive impact of social connections on our lives and tips on creating, strengthening, and maintaining social bonds.

Year of Yes (Shonda Rhimes, 2016). The genre of this book is a bit different – it is an invitation to follow the author as she performs a year-long experiment of saying “yes” to life: “yes” to invitations to events and various activities, public speaking, participating in conferences, and all the other things she had never said “yes” to before. Shonda Rhimes’ book inspires to open your time and attention to the community and shows that it is the person saying “yes” to everything who benefits from it the most.

The Art of Showing Up: How to Be There for Yourself and Your People (Rachel Wilkerson Miller, 2020). Being friends with other people and maintaining those friendships for life is difficult. The author shows how to give your full attention to the in-person connection with other people in the age of technology without forgetting to start with yourself and your friendship with yourself.

INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY

Books

Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World (David Epstein, 2020). Plenty of experts argue that anyone who wants to develop a skill, play an instrument, or lead their field should start early, focus intensely, and rack up as many hours of deliberate practice as possible. If you dabble or delay, you’ll never catch up to the people who got a head start. But a closer look at research on the world’s top performers, from professional athletes to Nobel laureates, shows that early specialization is the exception, not the rule.

David Epstein examined the world’s most successful athletes, artists, musicians, inventors, forecasters, and scientists. He discovered that in most fields--especially those that are complex and unpredictable--generalists, not specialists, are primed to excel. Generalists often find their path late, and they juggle many interests rather than focusing on one. They’re also more creative, more agile, and able to make connections their more specialized peers can’t see.

As David Epstein says, our professional interests and personal leanings change the same way we change over time. The idea that our personalities are set in stone once we reach 30, 40, or 50 is a myth. The person you are right now is neither the best nor the final version of the person you can become.

Others

<https://www.wikipedia.org/> – just type in whatever interests you.

www.youtube.com – just type in whatever interests you.

<http://podcasts.lt/> – the most popular Lithuanian podcasts.

<https://chartable.com/charts> – the most popular podcasts in the world.

<https://hiddenbrain.org/> – a personal recommendation from the authors of the formula.

<https://www.ted.com/>, whose slogan reads “Ideas worth spreading”, updates its library with new speakers and topics regularly.

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/best-nonfiction> – „Goodreads“ is a great place for a book lover to find something. This link leads to non-fiction books.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOSITY

Books

[The Religions Book](#) (Big Ideas Simply Explained, DK). “Is there only one God? What happens after we die? What forces and ideas have driven the world religions forward?” A compelling and accessible read on world religions. Apart from finding out how religions became such an important part of the human experience, reading through history, you can find applicable ideas that reflect our inner worlds and worldviews.

[10% Happier: How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works](#) (Dan Harris, 2016). After having a nationally televised panic attack on Good Morning America, Dan Harris knew he had to make some changes. A lifelong nonbeliever, he found himself on a bizarre adventure, involving a disgraced pastor, a mysterious self-help guru, and a gaggle of brain scientists. Eventually, Harris realized that the source of his problems was the very thing he always thought was his greatest asset: the incessant, insatiable voice in his head, which had both propelled him through the ranks of a hyper-competitive business and led him to make the profoundly stupid decisions that provoked his on-air freak-out. Harris stumbled upon an effective way to do just that. It's a far cry from the miracle cures peddled by the self-help swamis he met; instead, it's something he always assumed to be either impossible or useless: meditation. Research suggests that meditation can do everything from lower your blood pressure to essentially rewire your brain. Dan Harris was sceptical about meditation, so he decided to write a book about it. If you also look at meditation with suspicion, this book is for you. Recommended to all beginners.

[Shinrin-Yoku: The Art of Japanese Forest Bathing](#) (Yoshifumi Miyazaki, 2018). The author talks about the healing power of forests (and nature in general, even city trees or house plants), and provides practical tips on maximising the health and well-being benefits of being in nature.

[Think Like a Monk: The secret of how to harness the power of positivity and be happy now](#) (Jay Shetty, 2021). “Who can help you find the meaning of life better than a monk? Jay

Shetty's experience and wisdom are priceless to those who strive for a better life and want to make the most of the opportunities they get." 26 thousand 5-star reviews on Amazon say a lot about this book and its author. First and foremost, this book presents the wisdom of Buddhism in an accessible and comprehensive way.

[The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World](#) (Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Abrams, 2017). In the book, Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu share their personal views and scholarly research on what are the inexhaustible sources of joy and how to find them in the constantly changing world. Serious conversations are followed by humour and fascinating memories of love and loss. These spiritual leaders examine countless complicated, painful, and complex topics and share their wisdom on living happily among inevitable hardships and transforming this feeling into a constant state of being.

Others

Meditation platforms:

Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>

Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>

10% Happier: <https://www.tenpercent.com/>

HOME AND HOUSEWORK

[The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up](#) (Marie Kondo, 2016). A book on tidying up, decluttering, and determining which items spark joy. Reorganising your home space by the KonMari method will give you more space for personal improvement, hobbies, happiness, and lightness. The tidiness of your home, according to Marie Kondo, is related to our relationship, past, and, of course, ourselves.

[Happier at Home: Kiss More, Jump More, Abandon Self-Control, and My Other Experiments in Everyday Life](#) (Gretchen Rubin, 2013). The author tries various experiments over a couple of months to make her home a safe, pleasant, and comfortable space for everyone in the household. The book discusses family, marriage, raising children, time management, and tidying up. Each month she chose a new topic with concrete resolutions and ideas, including all members of the family in her experiments.

[Fair Play: A Game-Changing Solution for When You Have Too Much to Do](#) (Eve Rodsky, 2021). The author started this book as a personal project on equal partnership when raising children. "Tired of being the main parent responsible for all aspects of her busy household, Eve Rodsky counted up all the unpaid, invisible work she was doing for her family -- and then sent that list to her husband, asking for things to change. His response was...

underwhelming. Rodsky realized that simply identifying the issue of unequal labour on the home front wasn't enough: She needed a solution to this universal problem. The result is a time- and anxiety-saving system that offers couples a completely new way to divvy up domestic responsibilities and live in a partnership that compliments each person in the couple." The book offers a detailed discussion of all the tasks related to family life and offers accessible ways to divide them among the couple.

The Home Stretch (Sally Howard, 2020). A book on the unequal share of housework between men and women. Howard combines history, scholarly research, and practical insights with journalistic and academic approaches. Full of valuable insights to rethink why inequality between women and men persists and how to move towards a fairer division of responsibilities.

Others

About sharing domestic responsibilities with your partner: How to split the chores with your partner — minus the drama and fighting. Jennifer Petriglieri PhD: <https://ideas.ted.com/how-to-split-the-chores-with-your-partner-minus-the-drama-and-fighting/>

WASTED TIME

Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World (Cal Newport, 2018). Most of us can't get away from work emails or social media notifications. This has become our daily habit. Cal Newport, a professor at Georgetown University, rethinks the very core of the contemporary world of constant connectedness. In this book, he shares his personal experience and stories of famous thinkers, academics, and leaders on setting goals, developing a habit of deep work, and learning rational time management for the best results in the shortest amount of time. Distraction-free work is the condition for meaningful results.

The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere (Pico Iyer, 2014). Pico Iyer paints a picture of why so many—from Marcel Proust to Mahatma Gandhi to Emily Dickinson—have found richness in stillness. Ultimately, Iyer shows that, in this age of constant movement and connectedness, perhaps staying in one place is a more exciting prospect, and a greater necessity than ever before.

Apart from this book, you can read "365 Tao: Daily Meditations" by Deng Ming-Dao or "365 Dalai Lama: Daily Advice from the Heart" by Dalai Lama, which give you a page of wisdom for each day of the year. Try to enjoy every page, even though you could go through the entire book in a couple of hours. Let each page occupy some time in your mind, and let the pencil in your hand fill out the empty space on the page with the thoughts that arise.

3.

Modern Dads

We started the project “Modern Dads” to show that dads can (also) take care of their children: bathe them, feed them, put them to sleep, comfort them when they are sad, interest them in new things, show them the world, explain things, go on adventures with them, develop their skills, and do everything else that their babies and toddlers need. “Modern Dads” is a project about the experience of parenthood, being involved in raising, educating, and caring for children from the earliest days through childhood, adolescence, and during their departure into the world. It is a space where dads talk about their greatest joys, moments of happiness, dreams, challenges, fears, adventures, lessons learned, and advice for other dads.

The project was initiated by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson together with the social advertising agency “Nomoshiti”.

All dads’ stories are available on <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/en/istorijos/> as well as on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/daugiaubalanso>, and Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/siuolaikiniaiteciai>.

If you would like to share your experience of parenthood, please contact us via teciai@daugiaubalanso.lt.



Adas, Gabrielè and Dominyka

Sometimes, when I catch myself looking at that tiny face soundly asleep, or diligently focused with their little tongue out, trying to draw another work of art, I think to myself: how can such a small person hold this much love? A person can barely form a cohesive sentence and the love is already so massive that it's hard to even describe the feeling. One of the only ways to find out is to become a dad. Until then, you can read all the parenting books in the world or futilely try to understand why those friends of yours went loony after having children. All in vain. Other people's children and their lessons learned are dry theories that fade away when those little aliens come into your life. Then, you banally ponder - what were you doing when you didn't have them?

Of course, kids are not fluffy pink unicorns that you observe from a distance and revel in the pleasure of having children. Parenthood requires a lot of compromises and the abandonment of a conveniently selfish life. You always know that you have created a human being, and no one can stop you from being an overprotective dad. Although, to be fair, when you have a second child this protective instinct dulls down. You become a lot more comfortable watching your offspring rolling on the floor in a restaurant, savouring the wheel of a toy car from time to time.



Tomas and Vincentas

In my opinion, the arrival of a child “leads” the man himself to the real, adult world. If until then, you can afford to fool around, be careless, and look at your duties and responsibilities light-heartedly, after the birth of a child, all of it changes. A man becomes a real man - responsible not only for himself but also for his child, for his family. Another thing that I experienced personally – the arrival of our child made me much more emotional. I suddenly felt the need to hug, cuddle, kiss, and shed some tears of happiness. Until then, I considered myself to be a colder person. My wife notices these changes too, and she views them very positively.



Simonas and Bernardas

Cuddling a sleeping child. This is an incredible feeling for both the father and the child, who soundly sleeps in the meantime. With my child, I try to be honest and not to lie. Communication that is based on trust is the most valuable. Sometimes it seems incredible how your priorities change after the birth of a child. Everything else becomes so insignificant! Nothing is clear, but at the same time, everything is clear. The goal is to get to know the personality. That's your all-time favourite thing to do (it turns out). Don't miss the moment when the child "finds their hands". An adult who just found out they could shoot lasers from his finger would look somewhat similar.



Innocent, Elena and Anelè

Creating a close connection with my daughters from the early days is very important to me so we spend a lot of time together. We like going on hikes, camping. Since we live in Lithuania and Lithuanian is not my first language, I was also their language teacher. We read books, play games, and watch films in French. So, in a way, we have our secret language . Teaching my girls French is important to me also so they could talk to my side of the family, friends, and relatives.

Being a dad is an immense responsibility and such a joy to see them grow up. I understand that as they grow older, I will be less able to protect them and they will have to make more decisions by themselves, so I try to help them be strong and confident.



Armas and Rusnè

The moment that Rusnè was born changed both me and my entire life. I believe that every man should participate in the birth of his child, and to begin bonding with him or her even before the child is born, and continue doing so with each passing day. I love being a dad, even though it is a very responsible job, full of challenging moments that make me stronger, teach me patience, how to plan my time, and how to appreciate every single hour. Rusnè helps me look at the world in a new light, with wide-open inquisitive eyes. I had somehow forgotten this feeling. But now I learn new things with Rusnè every day, and only one year has passed with her in my life. All of this would not have been possible without my wife Saulè, with whom I feel fearless and fortunate to enjoy this ongoing adventure. So, thank you Saulè, for being with me and putting up with all of my nonsense.



Ažuolas, Joris and Markas

After the birth of my first son, Joris, I started identifying with the role of a dad quite quickly. At the same time, I felt that I took a giant step in my journey of personal maturity. I no longer felt responsible only for myself; the superficial agenda for the day took on a lot more meaning, and my level of patience doubled. When Mark came into the world, my level of patience only continued to grow. When I watch both of my children grow up and communicate, I live through my childhood again in my mind. Joris is already a first grader. I remember myself well at that age - the first day at school, the excitement of learning new subjects, the routine and waiting for the weekend, developing my own interests and hobbies that seemed a little strange to my parents.

My most important task now is to raise my beloved and loving sons. Brave, curious, just. I have experienced bullying, so I understand what it means to be rejected or abused. I try to raise my children not only with thick skin for the opinions of others or the “treat others as you want to be treated” mentality. I want them to act in the face of injustice, to take care not only of themselves but also of others. I hope we will achieve this.



Vilius and Gilė

Parenthood is a serious step. You must face it responsibly - having a child requires 100% dedication. It's not an office job where you can take a break. You are a father 24/7, and it changes everything: you no longer belong solely to yourself, and you become responsible for another person, a small, helpless person who depends on you. If you don't want to become a cardboard father, meant only for money and discipline, you must be fully involved. Only then do you truly realise what it means to raise a child. Observing from afar, everything seems so simple - you get up and take care of things. But when you experience this "simplicity" yourself, you come to appreciate the effort and help of others much more. When you're alone with a child, it is difficult and scary at first; you worry that you wouldn't cope with something. Spending time together strengthens the connection and makes it qualitatively different: the child starts reacting to you, looking at you differently, wanting to be together, to do something together. When a child comes to their father instead of their mother to ask for something: this is a true moment of pride. The mom may not be happy with that but for the dad - that feels very nice.



Mantas, Jokūbas and Gabrielius

My time with children is often quite different from their time with their mother. We have two boys, so my wife doesn't get to enjoy the so-called "girly" activities. Our boys, just like me, hate shopping, dressing up when we go out, etc. Usually, our entertainment is active time together. Since I love sports, we often spend time actively, starting with bicycles, scooters, and going on walks. Sometimes we go on bicycle trips 30-40 kilometres long or even longer. We go off to do various boyish activities, like riding karts or going to the shooting range and my wife sees us off with an entirely clear conscience, without feeling the need to join herself. It's my type of dad time. We try to divide the responsibilities of raising children equally. Still, their mom often devotes more of her daily time and care. Therefore, I try to compensate for it by inviting my children to do something fun together whenever I can.

The biggest adventure that I can remember was the almost a month-long trip to Croatia that just the three of us went on. We drove our car through Poland, the Czech Republic, and all the way to Croatia, where we lived in a tent for two weeks. I remember my wife calling me and asking what we were up to. I say that I was working on the computer and the children were swimming in the sea. She may have been a little worried, but I knew that my confidence in our boys was very strong and that they could manage many things by themselves. At the same, this trip was a challenge, and I had to face all their questions alone, deal with all the serious conversations, all the emotions, good and bad, etc. The most interesting thing is that after we returned and talked about our trip, we got a lot of reactions from our friends. There are quite a few friends in our group who only have sons, so I noticed that they also started taking their boys on father-son outings, hikes, or elsewhere.

Trying to balance parenting with work is tricky. Sometimes you have to work at home, at other times - leave work later. I noticed that spending quality time that's fully dedicated to the children (even if it is just half an hour or an hour) is much more effective than spending loads of time together, for example, watching TV or constantly checking the phone. I try to take my children to our summer house to do some housekeeping chores whenever I can. We spend time together, work in nature, and learn how to construct and fix things around the farm. I want to pass on the knowledge that I have learned from my old man. I want them to know how to cut wooden planks and do other farm work.



Bartas, Bernadeta and Danielius

Parenthood to me is about joy and calling. I get as much joy as I can give to my children. As a father, I'm responsible for healthy development of child and their health, but most of all, I am responsible for their happiness. Is there a recipe? Spending as much time with your children as possible: play, learn, love and sometimes be angry, then apologise, forgive, and love again. Me and my wife are also foster parents. Four children lived in our family temporarily. Being a foster parent is not easy, but it fills me with joy. Seeing how children who are so hurt come into our family, finally get to feel safe, recover, and get back on their feet is an incredible feeling. Parenthood is awesome!



Audrius and Elijus

The birth of a child is hands down the strongest and the most difficult positive emotion to put into words. The birth of my son turned the world upside down for me and shuffled all the priorities, you suddenly realise it's not work that matters the most. That a sense of responsibility 24/7 becomes the new norm and reality. The child's cheers during the day compensate for sleepless nights, and their chatters and sincere laughter compensate for the anxiety. You realize that this transformation of the world is for the better, it's full of new experiences and positive emotions. Although you may not even notice it yourself, you begin to change, you have to think not only about yourself and your own free time but also about the needs of the little one, you have to create their future. You begin doing countless other cute things that you have not even thought about before... That is simply awesome, and you realise that it will continue being just as awesome!



Laurynas and Kazimieras

I'm a first-time dad. We planned on having children, but it was unexpected, nonetheless. As in, we didn't expect it to happen so fast. With the news we got an influx of energy to furnish our new home as soon as possible. The possibility of losing Kazimieras before his birth came just as fast and unexpected. With that, the time for furnishing the house ended. Mom had to protect Kazimieras on bed rest, and I was taking care that she had all she needed by her side.

From the very start of our relationship, creating an equal partnership was very important to us both. In the same way, it was important to us that our child would have both parents actively involved in their life. We had decided before the birth of Kazimieras that I would be the one going on paternity leave. Kazimieras' mom is an architect working in private practice. On the one hand, she can be flexible with her working hours but, on the other hand, a long career break would mean having to look for new clients and starting all over again.

The day I was the proudest of myself as a dad was our first night with Kazimieras and the 5-6 nights following that. The first week he slept perfectly during the day, but at night he only wanted to do was hang out. He would look at me, eyes wide open, and I would talk to him about everything and anything – I would name all the animal species that sleep that I know of until we both would fall asleep at dawn.

My wife had a difficult birth, we had to stay in the hospital for a week because of her condition, and I took care of both her and our son because she couldn't stand up. I was unpleasantly surprised that even though everyone in the hospital knew about my wife's condition, everyone still assumed that it was her who was taking care of our son and I don't even know his clothing size or how to change diapers. Maybe we are quite down-to-earth, but parenting didn't bring many surprises to us. To me, getting to know the modern parenting culture was more of a "cultural shock". Essentially, moms face abnormally stereotypical expectations, and the capabilities of dads are undermined to a point where "it's better to leave your children with grandma than with your husband because he won't cope". On the other hand, for the first six months, moms are greeted with "Howwasthebirthareyoubreastfeeding?" while dads get a standing ovation for merely being around their child or showing up somewhere with a child. When you both parent the child equally, witnessing how they grow up, sharing and understanding the things you notice with your partner is an incredible experience. Since I am a programmer and take an interest in artificial intelligence, it's so interesting to observe how various human abilities develop and how the same action is perfected by repeating it over and over again. Have you ever noticed that once a child learns something new, for some time they repeat it non-stop?



Rinas and Lukas

When Lukas was born, I received a new teacher of empathy, mind-reading, patience, creativity, and even singing... The list is long and new things add to it every day. In other words, it's hard work. If I work and learn well, I get a reward – the first smile, or a full diaper (to be honest, the first time was quite funny, I even took a picture). I wanted to celebrate with everyone. Only later did I realise that I was losing my mind.

During the first nights I was listening to his every inhale and exhale. If you paid that much attention to an adult, I am sure you would be able to read their mind. I'm so glad that I get to be with him every day and every minute. I don't want to lose one moment of it because each one is surreal and different every day. Now, he laughs, stands on his hands, tries walking, and swims in the bathtub. I understand that these things might seem simple but to me these are miracles. First, we took pictures and videos of his every step. We recorded his sounds at night. To be honest, we really did lose our minds. Now, we calmed down a bit.

Most of all, I am afraid to not ruin the child with my rules, upbringing, and worldview. They're born saints, it'd be great if they would stay that way.



Tomas, Rapolas, Motiejus

I learned that I would be a dad on the phone because I was away at a basketball camp. Before announcing this Daiva told me to sit on a bed instead of a wheelchair because when I found out I would fall out of the wheelchair. When the “robbers” (the twins Rapolas and Motiejus) were born, I didn’t know what to do with myself, I wanted to scream from the rooftops, and share this news with family and friends. That special feeling lasts to this day, it’s incredible. With this event, everything changes very quickly, starting with the daily routine, habits, and getting to know yourself anew. Needs and desires shift radically – it turns out that I, personally, do not need that many things, and for the “robbers” I want to give as many opportunities as possible.

I often feel proud of them, but of course, it imprints on my mind more when strangers point out that they’re friendly and polite. When they were younger, about 4-5 years old, they wanted to become “military doctors” so they could heal me and others who are in pain.

The hardest thing for me as a dad is my “wheelchair situation”. Due to the infrastructure and the mobility of the wheelchair, I cannot realise all my dreams and the dad duties. But constantly working on yourself and trying to be a better dad every day is just as difficult.



Vaidas, Linas, Lukas and Leonas

The strongest moment in my life was when my first son was born, and I held him in my arms for the first time. I don't even know how to describe that feeling, strong is a very suitable word. At that moment, everything changes. I guess a lot of people say that life changes a lot with the birth of a child, and it really is true. Only by saying this, they usually don't emphasize that life fundamentally changes for the better, because for all the new worries that arise, there are so many fun moments. The pride in yourself as a dad comes from those fun moments. I no longer want to jump off a mountain with a snowboard myself, I want to teach my sons how to ski. Doing this together and learning together yields just as much enjoyment. When you show them how to do it day after day, you run down the mountain following them, supporting them, and picking them up after they fall; and then finally, after all this time, they slide down by themselves, and you see that their eyes are on fire, and they say: "Dad, I want to go again!", then the overwhelming sense of pride hits!

I would like to encourage other dads to spend more time with their children. It's just fun - it's fun to tickle, cuddle, and play hide-and-seek. When you spend time with kids, you get to be a kid yourself for a little bit.



Justinas, Dorotėja and Justinas

When a child appears in one's life, everything turns upside down in the truest sense of this saying. When another one appears, everything falls into place, because you can't escape from love. Having two children means twice as much love. I'm lucky because I have amazing kids. That's probably what billions of other parents say, and you can't blame them because it's 100 percent true. Children change their parents. I'm different now and I'm very happy with that. I'm excited about the opportunity to grow as a dad, not just how my kids grow up. In the beginning, you're euphoric from the idea alone that you brought a little human into the world. Then, you begin to ponder how to become an example to them, how to constantly take part in their life, so that they feel safe and loved. After all, it is important to hold their hand when they're taking the very first steps, and it is important to read a bedtime story so that their dreams are cosy and enveloped in wonderful stories. It is important to teach and learn with them, because this is the only way to create a connection. I hope to maintain this connection for the rest of my life, now it's my life's "salt and pepper". At the very beginning, all they have is you, their mom and dad, that's their whole world. You need to realize this and let this thought sink in. Maybe you won't believe it, or perhaps you will, but they also become everything to us as soon as we hold them in our arms for the first time. Seeing them grow and improve is the greatest happiness in life. We live in a great time. When the pace of life and work slowed down, we get to spend more time with our little ones. Will they appreciate this? I hope so. Even if they don't, I won't be upset because I did everything I could to be with them and for them.



Arūnas, Kasparas and Oskaras

Kasparas' and Oskaras' arrival into this world was very much anticipated, I was preparing for it. But now I can say that you can't really prepare for it. It's the most amazing thing that has happened in my life. They turned my life upside down. And you certainly can't be ready for that, you just have to accept it and enjoy it! At first sight, it may seem easy: just feeding, rocking to sleep, and changing diapers x 2, but being a dad is the most dynamic activity that brings new emotions and experiences every day! Every single day brings something new, not yet experienced! It's the biggest motivation to get up every morning with a smile without counting how many hours of sleep you had that night. Their first smiles, first hugs, first steps – I am beyond happy, and I enjoy every day, every moment spent with Kasparas and Oskaras. I am the happiest dad x 2!!!



Saulius, Elzė and Gustė

The best time with children is... now, at this very moment! Splashing in puddles until water flows from her rubber boots and my daughter tells me herself that maybe it's enough already. Reading books, even though she knows those fairy tales by heart, and corrects me if I miss a word. Making pancakes for breakfast together, and before going to bed letting her choose a story from my childhood that she'd like to hear. Were you ever a kid, what did you like to play, or were you afraid of the dark? We, the parents, and the adults, tend to attach too much importance to the daily routine, meals, and clothing, "you can do this" or "you can't do that". Yes, these things are important too, but not the most important. Children need to spend time together – simple, uncomplicated, open, warm time together. A presence in which a child says for no reason that they love you and share the secrets of their world. This summer, Gustė and I played a mosquito game before bed. I was the mosquito, my daughter - a Supergirl. I would lie next to her, looking at the heroine already asleep and giggling. The buzzing of a mosquito who accidentally came to visit the bedroom and my daughter's efforts to kick it out – how many warm feelings does this simple game bring about? These small everyday games leave the greatest mark.



Aidas and Meda

"I remember when I was child, we would go fishing, do sports with my dad. Swimming in the lake in the summer was the best time ever, so I want to give that to my child, too. I want to spend as much time together as possible, to give her all the knowledge I didn't get as a child. I always try to get involved in her games. I have never really felt adult, so all those childish games and activities sometimes get me more excited than my daughter.

Before her birth, I would think to myself – what challenges will this bring, will I be capable, will I know how to do it all? Now I can say confidently that I don't think parenthood is a challenge. It's true-to-life situations that always have some sort of a solution. You make these decisions following an instinct that develops once you become a dad.

Raising a child is the greatest joy. I didn't face serious hardships or challenges. Of course, it's also because of the mom, who loves our child even more. Me and my wife call this "teamwork"."



Ignas and Uršulė

When I first found out I was going to have a child, I didn't quite realize what was coming and what a wonderful feeling it would be when I finally got to hold that beautiful little girl in my arms. That feeling was exactly what was missing in my life, but I didn't know that until she arrived. Every day now is impressive in its own way because every day we have different adventures together and new conversations follow, although we might be speaking in different languages. Every morning begins with challenges, like what she will eat, where one of her socks has disappeared, whether I will be able to dress her up to go outside on the first try, and how long will she nap. While she is asleep, will I be able to clean up, prepare lunch for my family, and maybe even manage to squeeze in a game on PlayStation? Every night is the purest peace of mind when I see her soundly asleep. Every new day is a serotonin bomb and a new kick for me to try even more. Every day is a roller coaster – full of joy and tears, which are often from joy, also. My days now revolve around her because she is the Sun of my universe.



Gedvidas and Akmėja

Finding out that I would be a father wasn't at all Hollywood-like or dramatic. When the phone rang, I was at the window store, sitting in front of the manager and preparing to sign an invoice. My significant other announced the good news with panic and fear in her voice. I held my phone in one hand, a pen in the other, and the manager was looking longingly at the pen when I heard: "We're pregnant." A few moments later, I was on my way home to calm down the mother-to-be, and my face was beaming with happiness...

From a philosophical point of view, the feeling of parenthood is selfish... The parents themselves invite the children into the world, they get to enjoy that unconditional love and the child's dependence on them... Parenthood is a very full and thoroughly comprehensive feeling. It encompasses so much: happiness, fear, longing, joy, responsibility, annoyance, love, pride, etc. Before the birth of a child, I have never felt anything like this. Retrospectively, the past seems quite empty.

When the baby was born, the challenges began immediately, although I believe that as a dad, who is raising a beautiful daughter, I have the real challenges still ahead of me. One of the most memorable things was our little one's tummy problems... After many sleepless nights and hours of tears, we had to clean up the contents of the belly using some very unpleasant methods, and when we would succeed – two young parents, with their faces covered in poop – we were the happiest people in Lithuania. I think those who have had similar experiences are smiling now...

Being proud of myself as a dad is really challenging. You always view yourself critically and you always want to raise the bar even higher, even though I'm always proud of myself when I manage to stand up for my daughter in front of other little troublemakers. As the saying goes: "When a man is raising a son - he is bringing up his son, and when a man is raising a daughter - he is bringing up the whole neighbourhood"!



Justinas, Liepa Elžbieta and Justinas Kazimieras

My wife and I were really looking forward to meeting our firstborn daughter and our son, born a month ago. The opportunity to have children is a great gift, a privilege, and to this day we appreciate it very much.

I watched closely how many challenges Rūtelė had to go through during pregnancy and childbirth. I have the utmost respect for all mothers.

When raising our little ones, we want them to grow up to be driven, creative, hardworking people, not to become “passive knights of the sofa”. This encourages us to look for the best ways to educate our children.

Naturally, having children in the house significantly changed our daily life. Before children, you are free to do whatever you want in the morning, evening, or during the weekend. It is easy to arrive on time and meet your relatives or friends at the agreed time; after having children, this changes significantly. Children need our help with the simplest of things – food and hygiene, and they need our attention just as much – they like to play together, to experience new things. My wife and I were no party animals, so these changes in no way upset us. On the contrary, even though we face unexpected challenges and worries, the joy of being together or remembering those moments exceeds all our expectations.

My wife and I have hashed out that an active professional life is important to us both. It matters because of the need for self-realization – it’s fun to leave the house and contribute to professional things. It is also a practical calculation: if one of ours’s life ends unexpectedly, the second partner, being active in their profession, will be able to take care of the rest of the family. We try to share responsibilities in such a way that my wife can have a professional life, to the extent that it is not limited by natural circumstances (for example, I can’t breastfeed, or sometimes the children just want to be with their mom rather than me).

It is also important for children to experience both of their parents in different ways, perhaps. Our older daughter is about to turn three. We see how differently she reacts to us. Mom knows how to draw or play music (which I can’t say for myself). But I have more strength to raise my daughter up, to dance with her, or let her ride a balance bike more courageously, running side by her side. Liepa sees our differences and reacts to them.

Having said that, I can share a few concrete examples. When our daughter was one, my wife returned to work, and we found a babysitter to take care of our daughter. In our household, we have agreed that on weekdays, until 7-8 pm, Rūtelė hangs out with the children, and later I join in, taking the load off her a little bit. In the mornings, usually, I am the one to bring my daughter to kindergarten.

4. How to Achieve a Better Work-Life Balance? Ways and Means

The Labour Code provides for a wide range of work-life balance measures that can be used by people working in both the public and private sectors⁷.

Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours is a working time arrangement whereby the employee is required to be present at the workplace during certain fixed hours of the working day or shift and may work before or after these hours during the rest of the day or shift with a flexible start and/or end time.

The employer may set such working time arrangements for one or more employees (group of employees) or for all employees in the workplace. Such a schedule may apply to all or only a few days of the working week.

A flexible working pattern consists of fixed and non-fixed hours:

- The fixed hours of the working day (or shift) during which the employee must work at the workplace are determined by the employer. Changes to these working hours may be made by giving the employee at least two working days' notice.
- The non-fixed hours of the working day (or shift) are to be worked at the employee's choice before and/or after the fixed hours, i.e., at the beginning and/or at the end of the working day/shift. The non-fixed hours shall be determined by the employee.

Example. The employer has fixed the hours of the working day from 10:00 to 15:00, during which the employee must be present at the workplace. The flexible start time may be, for example, between 6:00 and 10:00 and the end time between 15:00 and 19:00. The specific flexible start/end time must be set by the employee.

Source:

The Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Articles 113, 116.

Individual Work Schedule

⁷ More on work-life balance measures: <https://daugiaubalanso.lt/en/for-employees>

The employee and the employer may agree upon an individual working time regime by establishing a personal schedule for the employee in question.

When establishing an individual work schedule, it is important to ensure that the working time limit* is met within a working day (or shift), week, month, or another accounting period that does not exceed three consecutive months.

Example. An employee is scheduled to work a 4-day week from Tuesday to Friday for 10 hours a day.

An individual work schedule differs from a flexible work schedule in that when an individual work schedule is established, the work is carried out on a fixed time schedule. In contrast, a flexible working pattern gives the employee the right to change the start and/or end of the working day or shift at their discretion.

If the employee's request to work on an individual schedule is based on the need to balance work and family commitments, the employer may refuse the employee's request only for compelling and objective reasons.

*The working time limit for an employee is 40 hours per week unless the labour law provides for a reduced working time limit for the employee, or the parties agree on part-time work.

Source:

Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 113.

Remote Work

Working remotely is a form of flexible work when the employee's physical presence at the workplace is not necessary, and they can perform tasks remotely, away from the workplace. Remote work may also be agreed upon when a part of the employee's functions can be performed remotely during a portion of working time. Although remote work has become a common form of work for many during the pandemic, it is worth bearing in mind that it is also enshrined in the Labour Code.

In Lithuania, remote work is available at the request of the employee or by agreement between the parties.

If the employee who works remotely incurs additional costs in relation to their work (e.g., they have to purchase or set up work equipment) these must be compensated. The amount of the compensation and the conditions of its payment shall be agreed upon between the employee and the employer.

It is important to be aware that the employee's refusal to work remotely when the employer offers to do so cannot be a legitimate reason for terminating the employment contract or changing the terms and conditions of employment. However, when a state of emergency or quarantine is declared in a country, different regulations apply in this respect.

Source:

Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Articles 49, 52.

Workcation

A workcation is a possibility for employees to work remotely from anywhere in the world, allowing them to combine rest and work. Employees should agree on the date, duration, and location of their work holidays with their employer in advance.

Part-time work

In Lithuania, the law allows for the employee and the employer to agree on part-time work by reducing the number of hours worked by the desired amount. Part-time work can be arranged flexibly: by reducing the number of working hours per day, per working week or working month, or both. Part-time work can be arranged permanently or temporarily.

An employee who has agreed to work part-time has the right to request a change to the part-time clause no more often than once every six months (unless otherwise agreed). The employer must consider this request and notify the employee of its reasoned decision within ten working days.

Temporary Part-Time Work

An employee who wishes to work part-time temporarily for family, personal or other reasons (for a maximum period of one year) has the right to submit a request to the employer. The employee's request for temporary part-time work (i.e., a reduction of the working day to 4 hours per day or a reduction of the number of working days to 3 days per working week) shall be granted if*:

- The employment lasts at least 3 years.
- The part-time work will not exceed one year.
- The request is made at least 30 days before the agreement on part-time work comes into force.

The employer may refuse the employee's request only for compelling reasons. An employee has the right to request part-time work again only after having worked full-time for the same period as the part-time work period.

*The abovementioned limitations on the duration of part-time work and the agreement of part-time work shall not apply where the employer agrees to different conditions for part-

time work proposed by the employee, or if:

- The employee justifies their request with a report from a health care institution based on the employee's medical condition, disability, or need to care for a family member.
- At the request of a pregnant employee, an employee who has recently given birth, or an employee who is breastfeeding.
- At the request of an employee with a child under the age of 3.
- At the request of an employee who is a single parent of a child under the age of 14 or a disabled child under the age of 18.

These persons may return to full-time work by giving two weeks' written notice to their employer unless the employer agrees to waive this time limit.

Part-time work shall not restrict the duration of annual leave, the calculation of seniority, promotions, qualifications, or other employment rights in comparison with full-time employees in the same or equivalent position, considering seniority, qualifications, and other circumstances. Part-time work shall be paid in proportion to the time worked or the work performed in comparison with full-time work.

Source:

Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 40.

Additional Days Off for Family and Personal Reasons

An employee may be granted additional paid or unpaid days off to take care of family or personal commitments to facilitate a healthy work-life balance.

Parental Days Off

In Lithuania, parents with family responsibilities who have 2 or more children under the age of 12 or a child with a disability under the age of 18 can take additional days off, known as "mamadieniai" (Eng. "mom's days") or "tėvadieniai" (Eng. "dad's days"). Both parents may use them each month.

Each parent with 2 children under 12 or a child with a disability under 18 is given 1 extra day off per month. Each parent with 3 or more children under 12 is given 2 additional days off per month. For these days off, the employee shall receive their average salary.

This additional time off may be used flexibly. For example, if an employee is entitled to 1 additional rest day a month, they can request a reduction of 2 hours per week

Half a day off on the first day of school

Working parents who are not entitled to parental days off are granted an additional half-day off on the first day of the school year. This entitlement is available to parents who have 1 or more children under the age of 14 in pre-school, primary, middle, or high school. For this time off, the employee shall receive their average daily salary.

Leave for single parents of children and children with disabilities

Additional annual leave is granted in Lithuania to single parents raising a child under 14 or a child with a disability under 18 alone. They are entitled to a longer annual leave: 25 working days if they work five days a week and 30 working days if they work six days a week. Employees under 18 are also entitled to this leave.

Educational leave

Educational leave may be granted when an employee is enrolled in formal education and/or non-formal adult education programmes.

Employees who are studying in formal education programmes (e.g., university studies or vocational training) may be granted a study leave upon presentation of a certificate to the employer for the following activities:

- 3 calendar days for the preparation and sitting of regular exams.
- 2 calendar days for the preparation and sitting of each credit test.
- The number of days provided in the curricula and timetables to perform and consult on laboratories.
- 30 calendar days for the completion and defence of a thesis or dissertation (Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral), or artistic project.
- 6 calendar days for the preparation and sitting of each national final exam.

Employees participating in non-formal adult education programmes (e.g., computer literacy, language courses, various seminars, etc.) shall be granted study leave of up to 5 working days per year to participate in non-formal adult education programmes. Such leave shall be granted with at least 20 working days' notice to the employer. It may be granted immediately or in instalments.

Creative leave

An employee may be granted A creative leave of up to 12 months to produce a work of art or

research. The payment of wages in this respect is governed by labour law and agreements between the parties.

Unpaid Leave for Personal or Family Reasons

In Lithuania, the employer must comply with the employee's request for an unpaid leave of at least the length requested by the employee if the employee:

- Has a child under the age of 14 (up to 14 calendar days).
- Has a disability, raises a child who has a disability under the age of 18, or cares for a person who has a disability or has been assessed as needing permanent nursing care (up to 30 calendar days).
- A father requests unpaid leave during maternity or birth leaves of the mother (or a mother requests unpaid leave during the father's parental leave), the total duration of these leaves may not exceed three months.
- Cares for a sick family member or provides a medical report on their health condition from a health care institution (the duration is set by the recommendations of the health care institution).
- Requests unpaid leave for the purpose of marriage (up to 3 calendar days).
- Requests unpaid leave to attend a funeral of a deceased family member (up to 5 calendar days).
- In cases of and in accordance with the procedures laid down in the collective agreement, for the duration laid down therein.
- At the initiative of the employer, this leave may be paid.
- During the workday or shift, unpaid time off shall be granted at the request of the employee and with the consent of the employer for the employee's personal needs.

Source:

Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Articles 135, 136, 137, and 138.

Part II.

A Toolkit for Employers

Author:

Ieva Laugalytė, Expert in the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson

1. Work-Life Balance: Stages of Change

Creating an environment conducive to reconciling work and private life within an organisation is a long-term process that requires the organisation's commitment to systematically act in the sphere of employees' work-life balance. The following steps will help ensure that the desired changes take place systematically, smoothly, and purposefully.



Team building. Any change begins with proactive and motivated people, so it is crucial to bring together a purposeful and creative team to change the organisation's internal culture regarding work-life balance. The team must be responsible for implementing changes, coordinating work, managing, and coordinating all processes, and disseminating information to other staff in the organisation. In this team, it is recommended to include employees from different departments within the organisation that could act as ambassadors of work-life balance in various organisational processes and decision-making related to it. It is also important to remember that issues of reconciling private life and work are complex and affect different groups of workers in different ways, so the best results can be achieved by ensuring a variety of different experiences and attitudes in the team. It is easier to develop a work-life balance policy that is friendly to all employees and meets the needs of all employees if people of all ages, different sexes, and different family backgrounds are involved in the whole creative process. If this is too complicated, valuable insights from different employees can be gathered through focus groups or other surveys.

Assessment of situation. The first task of the newly formed team, which aims to develop an effective and employee-friendly work-life balance policy within an organisation, is to assess the current situation. It consists of four steps:

1. An inventory of existing work-life balance measures available to the organisation's employees is carried out, i.e., create a list of all the measures that employees can access, including those ensured by law and those initiated by the organisation itself.
2. Administrative data is collected based on the inventory of measures and other factors related to the specific nature of the work which may affect the work-life balance of employees (such as overtime, business trips, etc.). To identify which groups of workers are more frequently/less likely to use different measures, data should be divided into demographic sections, such as gender, family situation, age, type of work (if relevant to the organisation), etc. Include additional divisions if this may be relevant given the specific nature of the organisation's work. Carefully collected data is an essential part of assessing the situation since it helps to examine whether and how workers use the work-life measures available to them, how different work-life balance issues affect certain groups of workers.
3. Although administrative data reveals general trends about the work-life balance culture within an organisation, it does not show the reasons behind the status quo and other delicate nuances. Organising focus groups can help achieve this. Given the problem areas highlighted by the analysis of administrative data, it is recommended to organise focus groups and collect employees' insights which explain why employees choose certain behavioural patterns and what factors have the most impact on the quality of their work-life balance.
4. Focus groups contribute to a better understanding of trends behind administrative data. Employee opinion surveys can shed light on gender-related attitudes that affect organisational culture and reveal how employees value their ability to reconcile work and private life. Carrying out an employee opinion survey is an important part of the situation

assessment that can highlight the areas where efforts are needed to raise workers' awareness.

Data analysis. Structured employee opinion surveys, focus groups, and administrative data allow us to take a holistic look at the challenges posed by work-life balance and plan targeted measures to address them. When analysing data, it is recommended:

- Not to limit the analysis to general data. If possible, divide the data by specific features relevant to the analysis, such as gender, age, family situation, work functions, etc. The experience of employees belonging to different groups can vary considerably.
- To search for links between insights collected in different ways (administrative data, focus groups, employee survey): they may conflict or complement each other. Either way, you will obtain valuable hints on which next step makes the most sense (focusing on changing attitudes, implementing concrete measures, or both) to implement and improve the organisation's work-life balance policy in the most effective way.
- To delegate the task of analysing data to someone with basic knowledge of gender equality. Surveys and research carried out in other countries and Lithuania always help to broaden one's horizons. External experts may also be invited to carry out the analysis.
- To remember that attitudes do not necessarily lead to behavioural changes. For example, a staff survey may show that most men working in a company support the statement: "It is normal for men to take parental leave."; but administrative data may reveal that this approach does not materialise in practice (men do not take parental leave). Thus, solutions to change their behaviour might be needed.
- To use the analysis as an insight laboratory that can help generate ideas for new work-life balance measures to be included in an action plan.

Planning. Having analysed the data and identified the work-life balance challenges faced by the employees or groups of employees, specific, targeted measures should be included in the organisation's action plan. The action plan should set out the organisation's objectives in terms of work-life balance, identify concrete measures and actions to achieve those objectives, define the timeline, and determine indicators that would measure the organisation's success in achieving the initial goals. When creating an action plan, pay attention to the tendencies that emerged during the situation assessment since this will enable to plan targeted, effective, and relevant measures that fulfil employees' needs. It is also necessary to choose staff members who can be responsible for implementing the measures, their coordination, and supervision. Once an action plan has been finalised, make sure to familiarise the head(s) of the organisation with it. Their approval is necessary to implement the measures envisioned in the action plan and remind the staff that the organisation considers work-life balance a priority.

Implementation. At this stage, the organisation is already implementing the envisioned measures following the priorities set out in the action plan. It is important to stress that ensuring a better balance between work and private life for employees is not an exhaustive process; even when all the measures foreseen in the plan are implemented, the job is not yet completed. You must return to the first stage, assessing whether the planned measures have delivered the desired effect or achieved the objectives. Problem points and issues should be identified, new priorities set out, and new work-life measures created. Situation assessments should be carried out periodically.

2. Recommendations and Tips for Employers

2.1. A Holistic Approach: Means, Work Culture, and Communication

Different groups of employees face different work-life balance challenges. Even though more and more fathers become involved in childcare and family matters on an equal footing with mothers, women still dominate as the primary family caretakers, which often is an obstacle to career progression. Knowing this, employers can help them (as well as active male caretakers) by changing the work culture and making it more accommodating to life outside of work.

Bear in mind that female employees without children or family commitments also have work-life balance needs. Their personal life needs should also be taken into account when considering organisational culture and policies.

Real results in work-life balance can only be achieved by an organisation consistently pursuing it at all levels: by involving different groups of employees in policy-making, taking their needs into account and constantly reminding them of the tools available, forming general policies, offering packages of measures, creating a company culture friendly to work-life balance, empowering managers to set an example for their employees, and spreading the message about the importance of work-life balance.

2.2. Work-Life Balance Measures

The work-life balance measures provided for in the Labour Code have already been discussed in Part I, Chapter 3 of this publication. Below are additional work-life balance measures that the employer may offer on their own initiative and details of what should be considered when providing employees with the measures from the Labour Code. This list is not exhaustive, and organisations may have additional measures to help employees achieve a better work-life balance, depending on the specific needs of their staff. This list should serve as a starting point in the situation assessment phase, an overview of what measures are available in the organisation, and a source of potential ideas for the development of the action plan.

Remote Work

Although remote work as a means of reconciling work and private life has been foreseen in the Labour Code for a while, it has only become a common practice for a large number of employees since the quarantine of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The State Labour Inspectorate has developed detailed guidelines for employers on organising remote work, ensuring the safety and health of employees, and anticipating all potential risk factors. Below are some of the key aspects that employers should be aware of.

In the case of working remotely, the time worked by the employee shall be calculated in accordance with the procedure laid down by the employer. The employee manages their working time at their own discretion, within the limits of the maximum working time and the requirements for minimum rest time. When remote work is assigned to an employee, the employer shall specify in writing: the requirements for the workplace (if any), the provision of tools and equipment to be used for work, the procedure for their provision, the rules for the use of the tools and equipment, and the department, unit, or person in charge to whom the employee shall report on the completed work in accordance with the procedure laid down by the employer.

Working remotely shall not result in restrictions on the calculation of seniority, promotion, further training, limit or restrict other employment rights. The employer's arrangements for the implementation of remote work shall not infringe the protection of the employee's personal data and their right to privacy.

The employer must enable employees working remotely to communicate and cooperate with other employees and employee representatives at the employer's workplace and to receive information from the employer.

Employers must ensure the safety and health of employees even when they are working remotely.

Ensuring occupational safety when working remotely

Safety aspects of remote work are described in the Occupational Safety and Health Act of the Republic of Lithuania:

- Those who work remotely must have the same safety and health conditions as other (i.e., on-site) employees.
- When deciding on remote work, the employer shall provide the employee with professional and personal protective equipment if necessary.
- The employer must train the employee on the safe use of the work equipment provided, and the employee must take care of their own safety and health and that of others around them by using the work equipment appropriately.
- The law defines occupational safety and health as all preventive measures designed to protect employees from occupational risks and/or to reduce them as much as possible.
- In addition, the State Labour Inspectorate's guidelines on remote work also state that:
- There are no exceptions to the employer's obligation to provide safe and healthy working conditions concerning remote work, so the employer must assess occupational risks in all cases. In other words, the requirements that apply in the physical workplace must also apply to remote work.
- If working remotely is requested by the employee, it is also the employee's responsibility to ensure that the location chosen by the employee is suitable and safe for the work. Therefore, the responsibility for ensuring safe working conditions lies not only with the employer but also with the employee.
- An employer may refuse to allow working remotely if the location of work does not comply with the legal requirements or may lead to higher compensation costs, especially if the remote work would take place from a foreign country.
- It is also recommended that the following risk factors be considered when organising remote work:
- Psychosocial risks. Working remotely can pose several challenges to work-life balance due to the confinement to a single space, especially for women, who are more likely than men to be involved in childcare and housework. These challenges may also vary due to the different personal characteristics, marital status, age, attitudes, etc. Organisations are advised to carry out an assessment of psychosocial occupational risk factors: the employer is advised to clearly outline and discuss responsibilities, expectations, and deadlines; employees are recommended to control their workload, follow work and rest patterns, take regular breaks, follow agreements with other colleagues, etc.
- Ergonomic risks. The remote workplace should comply with occupational health and safety requirements (as in the office): e.g., the desk, chair, and other facilities are suitable for the work, lighting is adequate, a separate space to concentrate is available, etc.

- Physical risk factors. The remote workplace must be safe (fire safety, electrical safety), accident prevention should be considered, etc.
- Environmental risk factors. The remote workplace must be comfortable to work in: noise-free, adequately lit, and provide adequate temperature and thermal comfort. For example, in the absence of adequate lighting, the employee may request the person responsible to purchase additional lighting equipment at the employer's expense, etc.

Sources:

Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, Articles 49, 52.

Methodological recommendations of the State Labour Inspectorate on the Possibilities, Advantages, and Implementation of Teleworking in Enterprises, Institutions, and Organisations, and on Ensuring the Safety and Health of Employees (Lith. "Valstybinės darbo inspekcijos Metodinės rekomendacijos dėl darbo nuotoliniu būdu organizavimo galimybių, privalumų ir diegimo įmonėse, įstaigose ir organizacijose bei darbuotojų saugos ir sveikatos užtikrinimo")

Career Consulting

The department or person in charge of personnel in an organisation may provide career counselling services to employees before and after a career break, which may be due to childcare or other personal needs, health problems, learning, or professional development goals. Career counselling helps the employees to prepare for a smooth transition and return to the workplace, discussing expectations and plans.

A career counselling session before or after a career break can lead to a plan that the employee and the organisation agree on:

- More flexible forms of working arrangements upon the return to work (e.g., flexible working hours, individual working time arrangements, remote work).
- Maintenance of professional skills, training, and updating qualifications during, at the end of, or after the career break.
- The employee's desire to voluntarily take part in the activity of the organisation, socialisation events, and periodic work meetings during the career break.
- The employee's need to remain involved in the organisation's information systems (e.g., document management system) and communication channels (e.g., newsletters, intranet).
- Possible career prospects and expectations within the organisation after returning from a career break.
- The organisation's readiness to meet the new work-life balance needs of the employee after the career break (e.g., the need to work in a workplace adapted to persons with disabilities or specific health problems, persons raising or caring for young children, etc.).

Measures for Employees on Parental Leave

To encourage a quicker or smoother return to work after parental leave the organisation may apply targeted measures while the employees are still on parental leave. A long career break, which is usually linked to parental leave, can lead to loss of skills, professional contacts, and motivation to work in the same workplace, and can make the employee feel detached from the company's activities, the nature of the work, and the team.

For these reasons, the employer may face a higher turnover of employees, a higher number of employees who do not return after parental leave, and a longer and more difficult adaptation process for returning employees. Thus, it is recommended that the employer should have in place and offer specific measures for those employees on parental leave. In each case, they should only be applied with the employee's consent.

These measures may include⁸:

- Seminars for improving qualification, training, and courses (remote or face-to-face)
- Access to self-learning platforms
- Subscription to professional media channels and websites
- Newsletters
- Invitations to periodic staff meetings
- Invitations to the organisation's or team's socialisation events
- Keeping in Touch (KIT) days (periods when the employee returns to work for a short period and joins the team)
- Maintaining/increasing salary levels for employees on parental leave
- Possibility of retaining the benefits package, etc.

Financial Support for the Care of Employees' Relatives

There are several ways how an organisation can contribute financially to the cost of care for the relatives of employees:

- By paying targeted benefits to the employee as a salary bonus,
- By reimbursing the employee for the cost of care as incurred and proven,
- By directly financing nursing and care services.

⁸ Fair Work Ombudsman. "Best Practice Guide: Parental Leave ", 2013. Available at: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/sites/default/files/migration/711/parental-leave-best-practice-guide.pdf>.

The financial support may be of a defined duration and amount, i.e., a defined period of financial support and percentage of support if partially financed. These conditions must be applied equally to all employees.

Kindergartens and Employment

In response to the lack of availability and accessibility of childcare services, some organisations may set up a staff room for children on their premises, with or without a caregiver. A kindergarten for the organisation's employees may also be set up. Facilities for children should be adapted to their different needs, such as doing homework, leisure time, education, etc.

In the absence of a room or nursery within the organisation, the cost of childcare (kindergarten, nursery, nanny, or babysitter) incurred by employees may be reimbursed by the employer, determining the exact period of the reimbursement and/or the amount/percentage (in case of partial reimbursement).

The organisation may also organise informal activities for the children of employees during their leisure time or cover (part or all) the costs incurred by the employees. Informal educational activities for the children of employees may include:

- Children's camps,
- Extra-curricular activities,
- Sports activities,
- Cultural events,
- Excursions, etc.

Such measures help employees who have children balance family and work commitments more smoothly.

Leisure Benefits

The organisation may provide additional benefits to employees for family and personal leisure time, for example, by providing access to:

- A sports club,
- A swimming pool,
- Sports lessons,
- Art classes,
- Cultural events, etc.

Health Benefits

The organisation may provide additional benefits to employees to maintain good health, for example, by providing access to:

- Private health insurance,
- Preventive health check-ups at the workplace,
- Vaccinations,
- Physiotherapy, massages, or spa services,
- Gym, swimming pool,
- Health packages (vitamins, food supplements),
- Extra days off to use health services.

Workcation

A workcation is a possibility for employees to work remotely from anywhere in the world, allowing them to combine rest and work. Employees should agree on the date, duration, and location of their work holidays with their employer in advance.

This is a great motivational tool to allow employees to escape from routine for a short while.

Guarantees and Financial Incentives for the Care of Employees' Relatives

There are several ways how an organisation can contribute financially to the cost of care for employees' relatives:

- By paying targeted benefits to the employee as a salary bonus,
- By reimbursing the employee for the cost of care as incurred and proven,
- By directly financing nursing and care services.

The financial support may be of a defined duration and amount, i.e., a defined period of financial support and percentage of support if partially financed. These conditions must be applied equally to all employees.

To balance work with the care of relatives, an employee may agree with the employer on flexible working hours, individual working time arrangements, remote work, part-time work, or unpaid leave. The employer is obliged by the Labour Code (see Article 28) to help the employee to meet their family responsibilities.

2.3. Creating a Healthy Work Culture and Communicating

The fact that an organisation has adopted work-life balance measures does not necessarily mean that they are used. Employees may avoid using the tools if they know that the organisational culture and work environment are not conducive to those who actively balance work and personal life commitments. The employer's role is crucial in creating a supportive organisational culture for people who are trying to balance work and private life.

Awareness-raising for Employees and Managers

Employee opinion surveys and focus groups may reveal that: employees are unaware of the availability of work-life balance measures in the organisation, are reluctant to use them, are fearful of being disapproved of by other colleagues or supervisors, and are anxious about having their career prospects affected, or are reluctant to express their family and personal life needs because of fear of having their motivation questioned by colleagues. To change this, the employer can raise awareness in various ways:

- By organising information campaigns on the work-life balance measures available in the organisation.
- Awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of work-life balance.
- By organising thematic communication weeks to discuss the challenges of work-life balance.
- Organising staff discussions or informal consultations about their needs regarding work-life balance.
- Conducting employee surveys or focus groups to examine how they manage to reconcile family, private life, and work commitments.
- It is important to note that awareness-raising is needed at the level of the whole organisation, and it is therefore recommended:
 - To organise awareness-raising training sessions for managers who make decisions on flexibility, work-life balance measures, overtime work, workload, etc.
 - To periodically include the topic of work-life balance in the training of HR specialists so that they are prepared to provide employees with the necessary information on the options available to them.
 - Explicitly include non-discrimination provisions in internal documents concerning persons using work-family balance measures, thus formally establishing a norm in favour of the employees at the organisational level.

Establishing Rules

To create an environment conducive to work-life balance, it is recommended that the organisation establishes clear internal rules to help employees maintain the distinction between work and private life. The rules must be known and followed by all employees in the organisation, including managers. The rules may vary depending on the nature and specificities of each organisation's work. Below are some suggestions on what might be useful to include:

- Employees and colleagues are not to be called during non-working hours (excluding exceptional cases).
- Emails to colleagues are sent only during working hours (when working before/after working hours, an automatic email is set to be sent during working hours).
- No writing/calling colleagues during their holidays or sick leave.
- The organisation clearly communicates that there is no expectation that employees will be available during holidays or sick leave.
- A professional communication platform is used for communication between colleagues, thus avoiding possible texting/calling during non-working hours.
- It is agreed that staff members do not have the professional communication platform installed on their personal computers/phones and do not check email during non-working hours.
- Efforts are made not to arrange important meetings at the beginning or end of the working day so that employees who have children can drop off or pick up their children at school. Avoid organising social events or important meetings after work.
- Respecting employees' privacy and rest time, not delegating tasks that need to be done outside working hours (unless they have been agreed upon in advance and providing for how the employee will be paid for them).

Example of Managers

The example set by managers, their involvement, and ownership are decisive factors in ensuring that measures to facilitate work-life balance are implemented and used in the organisation and creating a work culture supportive of employees' family concerns and personal life needs.

What can you do as a manager?

- Set an example that you would like your employees to follow. If you answer emails, calls, and/or attend meetings during holidays or leaves, stay at the office after hours or rarely

use your days off, you are sending a clear message to your employees that this is an acceptable working pattern in the organisation and that the same is expected of them. It is critical to understand that the manager's behaviour is visible to virtually everyone and creates clear expectations for other employees in the organisation.

- Encourage and support employees who communicate openly about their family and personal life needs. You can inspire employees to be more open about their personal lives by sharing the challenges you face in your own work-life balance. Establish a new norm that it is acceptable to talk openly about work-life balance.
- Never publicly criticise or shame employees who must leave a meeting or work early because of family and personal commitments. Show understanding and support for their needs.
- Never decide not to allow an employee to go on a business trip or an after-hours event on the sole basis that the employee has children. Give all employees equal access to business trips and important events, and only if the employee informs you that they are unable to attend for family or other personal reasons, find someone else.
- Make it possible for staff members to come to you for work-life balance issues.
- Organise routine meetings with staff (e.g., once a month) to find out the employees' needs in terms of work-life balance: what challenges they are facing, and what support and help they need at work to make the reconciliation smoother. Once you have identified the needs of your employees, you may wish to meet less frequently. These meetings are necessary to involve managers and increase the accessibility of solving these issues from the employee's standpoint. You may not be able to solve all the challenges at once, but the attention and effort shown can ease the burden on the personal lives of employees and relieve them of additional anxiety, tension, and stress.
- Review the employees' workload regularly to ensure that the objectives and tasks set can be achieved during working hours. Talk to employees to find out how long different tasks take - sometimes simple tasks can take much longer to complete than it seems. If necessary, redistribute work among team members and/or prioritise tasks that need to be done first.

3. Checklist of Work-life Balance Measures.

This checklist is meant for assessing what work-life balance measures are available in a given company. In the comment section, provide details about the concrete actions for implementing each of the measures.

Name of the organisation assessed:

☐ **Childcare leave**

Comments:

☐ **Working remotely**

Comments:

☐ **Pregnancy and birth leave**

Comments:

☐ **Flexible work schedule**

Comments:

☐ **Maternity and paternity leaves**

Comments:

☐ **Part-time work**

Comments:

☐ **Statutory parental days off**

Comments:

☐ **Additional paid days off**

Comments:

☐ **Availability of childcare facilities, kindergarden, baby-sitters or compensation for such services**

Comments:

☐ **Additional financial benefits to cover healthcare and residential care costs for employees' dependents**

Comments:

☐ Career consulting before and after a career break

Comments:

☐ Organising and/or financing camps, extracurricular activities, day trips for employees children

Comments:

☐ Family leisure benefits

Comments:

☐ Other one-time extra benefit payments, premiums, or bonuses related to personal and family life

Comments:

☐ Benefits for employees on childcare leave

Comments:

☐ Awareness raising and informational events for employees about work-life balance or related topics

Comments:

☐ Employee surveys about the needs and challenges related to work-life balance

Comments:

☐ Other measures

Comments:

Įvertinimas:

Vertino:

--

4.

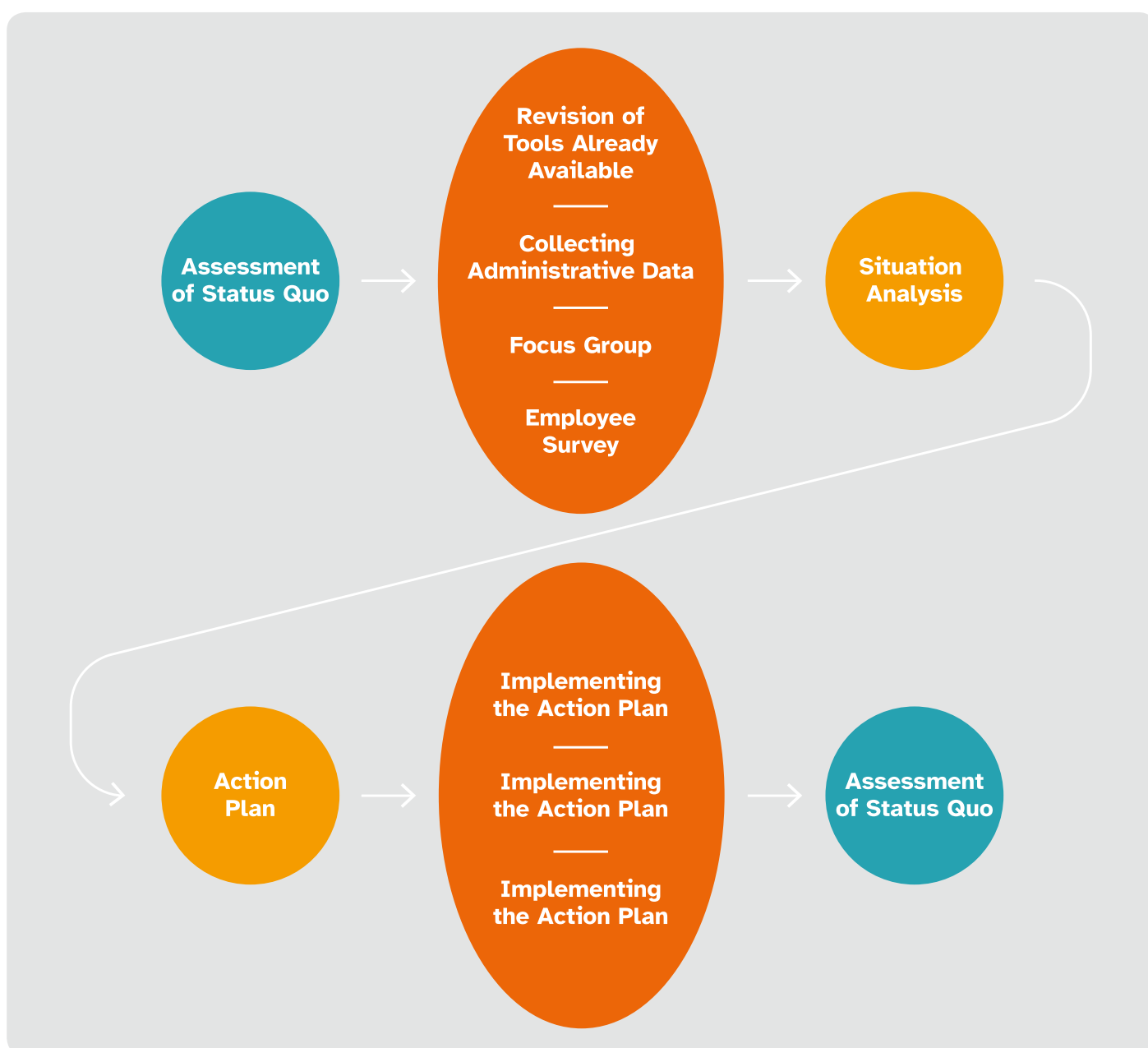
Good Practice: A “Swedbank” in Lithuania Case Study

Authors:

Kristina Vabolytė, Senior Personnel Consultant at “Swedbank” in Lithuania and
Margarita Jankauskaitė, Expert in Centre for Equality Advancement

The following case study reports the experience of cooperating with a large, foreign-owned company⁹. The actions described were implemented in 2020-2021.

The steps we have taken to establish sustainable work-life balance policy mechanisms for the company are shown in the diagram below. Further, the case study details each of its segments.



⁹ The Office of the Equal Opportunity Ombudsperson, together with the Center for Equality Advancement, worked with this company for 1,5 years, so that all the steps described in this case study would be implemented. The name of the company will not be disclosed due to sensitive data protection.

Preparation

Before Getting to Work

Developing a high-quality work-life balance policy that meets the needs of employees in the company requires thoroughness, responsibility, and creativity. Therefore, before getting to work, it is essential to bring together a team of people who believe in the power of ideas and solutions.

As you know, the best results are generated by a variety of different competencies and approaches. This case is no exception. Therefore, if possible, make sure that representatives of different departments with knowledge in personnel management, internal communication, and individual fields of work are included in the working group. There will be more insights and/or suggestions if colleagues of different ages are involved in the creative process. Gender-balanced teams also bring added value.

If the composition of the working group fails to reflect the diversity of the employees, make sure that the voices representing different demographics are heard via surveys.

Revision of Tools Already Available

There is a Lithuanian folk proverb that says, “Measure nine times, cut only the after the tenth” (in Lithuanian, “Devynis kartus pamatuok, dešimtą kirpk”), similar to the English saying, “Look before you leap”. Before sitting down to consider how to help employees avoid the stress of balancing work and personal life, research potential measures applied in other companies, both Lithuanian and foreign.

The analysis of the measures adopted in other companies shows that the list is quite extensive. Depending on the sphere of activity and the organisation’s size, not every company will be able to implement the suggested measures fully. However, before we start shaping the organisation’s policy on work-life balance, it is important to have a clear understanding of where we are at and in which direction we want to (and can) move.

You can use the template table in Part II, Chapter.3 to review the measures applied in your company.

Collection of Administrative Data

After a revision of measures implemented in the company, find out whether they are effective: to what extent they are applied, which employees have access to them and/or use them. Detailed administrative data can help to answer these questions.

Repeating the procedure every year can create an informative tool that allows you to evaluate the scope of the proposed measures. Analysis of the information collected (we will discuss this later) may reveal tendencies specific to organisational culture or employee

behaviour, which may constitute an obstacle to the full use of the measures. For an example of a table for collective administrative data, see Annex 1.

Focus Group: A Deeper Look

Administrative data can show the bigger picture but does not allow to discern more subtle details. Organising focus group discussions can help fill these gaps and pinpoint the subjective motivations of employees underlying certain patterns of behaviour.

Annex 2 to this description contains a list of focus group questions. As this is an example, it should be adjusted on a case-by-case basis according to the results of the administrative data. Focus group discussions can serve as an opportunity to discuss the problem areas highlighted by the administrative data (for example, it might turn out that men use their statutory parental days off more actively than women) and understand the individual motives behind the abstract numbers.

The more carefully you select the participants in the discussion to represent the diversity of employees, the more detailed the picture of the answers received will be. Therefore, make sure that the group of 7-9 persons (the recommended number of participants) is diverse and gender-balanced, meaning that the interviewees are of different ages, family compositions, different spheres of activity are invited. In Annex 3, you can find an example of a table for selecting focus group participants.

If needed, you can also organise several focus groups. When selecting participants, ensure that they can freely share their honest opinions; inviting both managers and employees below the managerial level to the same focus group may restrict the participants and the level of openness may diminish significantly. A trusted, neutral person should moderate the focus group discussion.

Employee Survey

While the focus group discussions help to understand the trends lying beneath the abundance of administrative data, the employee opinion poll helps identify attitudes related to gender roles that influence the organisational culture in the company.

Sometimes achieving a greater work-life balance is impeded not by the lack of measures offered by the company, but by general gender stereotypes. This circumstance should not be ignored, because the likelihood of an action is determined by several main factors: personal assessment of potential action (I think that acting in such a way is good), perception of how this action will be seen by others (I think that people who are important to me will react positively to this behaviour of mine); belief that it is possible to carry out such an action (I think that I will be able to act in such a way).

Gender prejudices that are entrenched in the society and affect our collective consciousness

can pose a major obstacle for creating a flexible and family-friendly work culture: for the proposed measures to be effective, these practices put in place must be supported and upheld by the heads of departments, co-workers, and the employees themselves. In other words, it must become the norm of organisational culture.

Also, pay attention to what the employees think of the work-life balance policy currently implemented. What are their attitudes on gender equality? What are their expectations for the policy of the company? For an example of the employee survey questionnaire, see Annex 4.

Situation Analysis

Now that you have collected so much valuable information (administrative data, insights from surveys, and focus groups), focus on processing it and coming up with ideas for the action plan.

The diversity of employees in the company is a significant factor that enriches the collective experience and, essentially, determines the company's success. At the same time, it is a challenge to form an inclusive organisational culture. Our lives are unique and complex, so it is unlikely to find a universal recipe for reconciling work and life. However, a package of well-thought-out measures could facilitate resolving such problems. How can one know what the contents of this package should be? How to include exactly what is needed? To find the answer to these questions, use the analysis of the information collected. To tackle this task more effectively, we suggest paying attention to several things:

- Do not limit yourself to general data. Whenever possible, break it down by specific characteristics relevant to the analysis, such as gender, age, family composition, work functions, etc. The experiences of employees belonging to different groups may vary considerably.
- Look for links between insights gathered in different ways (administrative data, focus groups, employee survey): the data may be contradictory or complementary. In both cases, these are valuable clues as to what measures should be taken to improve the work-life balance of the employees (focusing on changing attitudes, implementing specific measures, or both).
- Remember that attitudes do not necessarily lead to behavioural changes. For example, an employee survey may show that most men in the company agree with the statement that "It is normal for men to take parental leave", while the administrative data may reveal that this attitude does not translate into action and men do not take parental or paternity leave. Thus, you will have to seek for solutions to change their behaviour.

- Consider your analysis in the broader context of the gender system (gender-related attitudes, expectations, roles, inequalities, power dynamics). People with a level of knowledge in gender equality should perform this task. Analysing other research papers, both foreign and Lithuanian, can always help to expand horizons in this field. Perhaps, after evaluating the situation, you will decide to invite external experts to perform the analysis.
- Use the analysis as an “insight lab” to help generate ideas for possible measures to include in the action plan. Dream big.

The Action Plan

When a company has 50 or more employees, following the provisions of the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania, it must have an equal opportunities policy and determine concrete measures for its implementation (Labour Code, Article 26). An action plan for improving work-life balance could become an integral part of a broader equal opportunity policy.

The action plan should be specific and feasible: it shall specify the objectives, tasks, persons responsible for coordinating and/or implementing the activities, timetable of tasks to be carried out, and indicators of the results to be achieved.

The team preparing the action plan should include staff that is knowledgeable in personnel management, internal communication, and administration. Also, invite other employees who want to join – diversity in the team will stimulate the creative process. However, it is important to monitor the number of team members and ensure that the team does not expand beyond the capacity of constructive work. If necessary, invite a wider circle of colleagues can when considering concrete tasks to achieve pre-determined objectives.

Special attention should be devoted to internal communication – how to ensure communication about the work-life balance measures implemented in the company that is sufficient, timely, and not excessive? What channels of communication to choose and how to ensure that they remain systemic (e.g., creating a system to introduce the measures to new employees, sending newsletters via email, posting online, organising targeted information campaigns about the proposed measures, etc.)?

Remember that internal communication is instrumental not only in informing but also in forming employees' attitudes and the overall organisational culture. The more we hear about questions related to work-life balance, the more important they seem to be and encourage us to rethink and change our behaviours.

To prevent the plan from collecting dust, set up a monitoring committee to supervise its implementation. Decide how often meetings of the committee will take place. They can follow the timetable of planned tasks or any other agreed frequency (for example, every four to six weeks). This is an excellent opportunity to celebrate completed tasks, discuss the

challenges and adjust the plans.

To avoid obstacles while implementing the carefully crafted action plan, top executives should endorse it, confirming that achieving a healthy work-life balance is an essential part of the organisation's culture, not just an announcement for public image.

Once the action plan has been discussed, drawn up, and approved, it is time to inform the employees. Spreading the message will help to shape the organisational culture and values, promote transparency, and increase motivation to achieve the goals set out in the plan.



„Kurdama balansą savo gyvenime padėjau sau atrasti save, daugiau laiko skirti pomėgiams, šeimai, ritualams (vieną kartą per savaitę namų SPA: vonia, kaukės, muzika) ir dienotvarkės planavimui. Supratau, jog darbas lieka darbu ir išeinant namo po darbo dienos jį reikia palikti ofise. O tada prasideda savirealizacija, namai, šeima bei draugai.“

– Karolina Veličkė

Surask savo balansą
www.daugiaubalanso.lt



„Kad liktų daugiau laiko skaityti knygas, naudoju e-skaityklę, kuri turi didelį privalumą – natūralų apšvietimą. Žinių puoselėjimui turiu „LinkedIn Learning“ paskyrą telefone – taip užsitikrinu, kad laisva pietų minutė tampa naudinga laiku sužinant naujoves technologijų pasaulyje“

– Martynas Remeika

Surask savo balansą
www.daugiaubalanso.lt

To Conclude: What Is Important to Keep in Mind?

To sum up, we would like to emphasise several aspects of this case study. We hope that our insights will help you develop a sustainable work-life balance policy that will contribute to promoting gender equality not only at the organisational level but in society at large as well. Therefore, the following aspects are particularly noteworthy:

- Political support. The measures to improve work-life balance are a part of a broader organisational culture. Cultivating it may require not only cosmetic but systemic changes; thus, it is impossible without the approval and endorsement of top-level management.
- Community support. Even the most forward-thinking ideas can fail without the support of the community they are intended to. Therefore, when developing action plans for improving work-life balance, devote attention to the employees' opinions and involve their representatives in the brainstorming processes.
- Revision. Revision. Everything changes and employees' needs related to work-life balance are no exception; therefore, work-life balance measures should be periodically reviewed. Over time, some of them may lose relevance and demand for others may arise. Such a revision should take place at least once a year.
- Internal communication. What is the use of all the wonderful benefits offered by a company if its employees know very little about them? If strategies and channels are considered carefully, internal communication can serve as a tool to both inform and form organisational culture.
- Attention to diversity. Diversity is an inevitable part of our everyday life. The success of any policy, including those of companies, depends on acknowledging this fact, not disregarding it. Accepting diversity must be based on concrete actions and understanding that positive effects of diversity are contingent on not using our differences as a pretext to discriminate, ignore, or marginalise.
- Attitude is not equivalent to action. Those who think and say that smoking is harmful, do not necessarily quit smoking. This rule applies to other actions, too. Thus, make sure that declared attitudes correspond to actions: if the importance of work-life balance is widely discussed in a company, but chiefs and managers continue to show a negative example by staying at the office after hours, it is unlikely that the employees will behave otherwise and trust the declared policy instead.

- Holistic approach. A holistic approach helps to ensure the sustainability of work-life balance when adopted at all levels: the company develops the general policy and suggests measure packages; heads of departments act as mediators of implementing the policy in practice; employees get to know the benefits available to them and use them to improve work-life balance.
- Work-life balance policy is a process. They say that “now” lasts for three seconds before the next moment replaces it. We are in a continuous stream of feelings, experiences, thoughts, and practices. Work-life balance policy is better understood as a gradual process, rather than a document with a concrete beginning and an end.

*Spheres of activity could be production, direct work with clients, administration, etc. Each company's working group should decide which employee groups are significant and should be considered separately in the context of their company.

Annexes

Annex 1. Example of an Administrative Data Questionnaire

Indicator	Gender		Family composition (Does the employee have children?)				Sphere of activity*	
	Women	Men	0-6-year-old	7-12-year-old	13-18-year-old	No children	X	Y
All employees								
Persons who have been on childcare leave								
Persons who returned to work after childcare leave								
Persons who did not return to work after childcare leave								
Men who have been on paternity leave								
Women who have been on pregnancy and birth leave								
Persons who used statutory parental days off								
Persons who requested a certificate of incapacity for work ("medical certificate of absence") to care for a sick dependant								
Persons who used paid leave to take exams, tests or participate in higher education graduation ceremonies								
Persons who used statutory health days off								
Persons who used the additional day of the first day of school because of a child attending school								
Persons who are currently working on an individual work schedule								
Persons who are currently working remotely full-time or partially								
The number of granted requests to work on a flexible work schedule								
Persons who currently have fixed working hours and working days								
Persons who are currently working part-time								
Persons who were paid for overtime								
Persons who used career consulting service this year								

Annex 2. Example of a Focus Group Questionnaire.

Communication

How well informed do you feel about the additional benefits offered by the company, measures for maintaining a work-life balance? How would you evaluate the communication about these benefits (e.g., its accessibility, clarity, presentation)? Is this information easy to find? How can this communication be improved?

Working remotely, flexible working hours, hybrid work

How much has the flexibility at your work increased due to the pandemic? How did it manifest? How would you evaluate the changes? How would you evaluate the formalisation of flexible working arrangements, e.g., when an individual work schedule is set officially, a flexible start and end of work is set or a formal agreement on remote working days is established? How would you evaluate situations where an employee agrees with their manager on work flexibility informally, without legitimising it?

Overtime policy and tracking system

How important do you think it is to talk about the issue of overtime in an organisation or company? Who should initiate it? Recently, was this issue discussed in your company?

Chiefs and managers

How important is the role of chiefs and manager when it comes to work-life balance questions (working overtime, statutory parental days-off, flexibility of work)? How much access to work-life balance measures depends on the decision of one's direct manager? How clear are the rules defining work-life balance and the organisational attitude towards these matters? How much attention does the management of the company pay to this topic? What kind of attention is (was) it, how did it manifest?

Forming a culture favorable to work-life balance

Who do you think should be responsible for the work-life balance of employees - managers or employees themselves? What should be their roles in ensuring this balance? What causes the most obstacles, difficulties, hindrances?

Annex 3. Example of a Table for Selecting Focus Group Participants

Name	Gender		Does the employee have children?				Sphere of activity		
	Woman	Man	0–6-year-old	7–12-year-old	13–18-year-old	No children	Customer service	Office	Production
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									

Note. This table helps choosing participants for focus group discussions and ensuring that different aspects of employees' identities are represented. Write down the names of the participants and information about aspects of their identity. Ideally, no column of the table should be left completely empty, and the list should be as gender-balanced as possible.

Annex 4. Example of an Employee Survey Questionnaire

1. How do you feel about balancing your personal life and work?

- 1) Great
- 2) Good, some challenges arise but I manage to deal with them
- 3) Average
- 4) I am not satisfied with it; it could be better
- 5) Bad, I have a lot of challenges to overcome every day
- 6) I don't know

2. Please answer whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Completely agree	Partially agree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Partially disagree	Completely disagree
Fathers can take care of young children just as well as mothers					
It seems normal to me if a woman returns to work without being on parental leave for a year					
It seems normal to me when a man takes parental leave					
It seems normal to me when a man presents a medical certificate of absence to take care of a sick child or another family member					
The need to balance work and private life is only relevant for a small number of workers					
In my workplace, it is normal to work overtime if necessary					
Work-related issues often have to be dealt with outside of working hours					
It is normal when, due to heavy workload, a person chooses to not go on vacation					
I feel like commitments at work interfere with my personal life					
I know what work-life balance benefits I can use in my workplace					
I can take advantage of flexible work models (e.g., working remotely, flexible work schedule) in my workplace without any problems					
I feel stressed when it comes to reconciling work and personal issues					
To pursue my career, I would be prepared to work longer hours and abandon personal plans (cancel training sessions, weekend plans, etc.)					
Taking parental leave would negatively affect my career					
Repeatedly using the certificate of temporary incapacity for due to family obligations (e.g., due to illness or disability of a child or other family member) would negatively affect my career					
I have kept secret the real reasons for leaving work early or during day from my colleagues or employer to take care of personal matters					
I would like my working conditions to be more flexible					
My employer/manager views balancing work and life positively					

3. When accepting a job offer, I would give priority to a workplace which:

- ☐ offers lower salary and the possibility of conveniently balancing family and work responsibilities
- ☐ offers higher salary but without the possibility of conveniently balancing family and work responsibilities
- ☐ I have no opinion

4. Choose answers (up to 5) that suit you best:

- If I was to choose a workplace, the most important thing for me would be:

- ☐ salary
- ☐ friendly team
- ☐ possibility to balance work and family responsibilities
- ☐ career opportunities
- ☐ opportunities to learn and improve
- ☐ opportunity to have an interesting job
- ☐ notoriety and reputation of the organisation
- ☐ bonuses offered by the organisation

5. Choose answers that suit you best:

- The success of a woman's career in my workplace can be hindered by:

- ☐ having children
- ☐ not having children
- ☐ young age
- ☐ older age
- ☐ appearance
- ☐ taking care of a family member with disability
- ☐ looking after an ill or elderly family member
- ☐ none of the above
- ☐ other (write down) _____.

- The success of a man's career in my workplace can be hindered by:

- ☐ having children
- ☐ not having children
- ☐ young age
- ☐ older age
- ☐ appearance
- ☐ taking care of a family member with disability
- ☐ looking after an ill or elderly family member
- ☐ none of the above
- ☐ other (write down) _____.

6. Your gender:

- ☐ 1. Woman
- ☐ 2. Man

7. Do you have underaged children?

- ☐ 1. Yes
- ☐ 2. No

8. Are you taking care of elderly, ill or family members with disabilities?

- ☐ 1. Yes
- ☐ 2. No

Annex 5. Example of a Company's Work-Life Balance Action Plan

Objectives and actions	Person in charge	2022/01	2022/02	2023/12	Result indicators	
							2022	2023
Objective No.1. Reducing the negative effects of childcare leave on employees' career prospects	John Smith Petras Petraitis						Employees' opinions about the statement: „Taking parental leave would negatively affect my career“	
1. To analyse the attitudes, needs, and expectations of employees with children under 2 years of age; to set conditions that may facilitate or encourage the return to work from childcare leave	Personnel department						45%	35%
1.2. To prepare a "Keeping in touch" info-pack describing principles and activities for employees on childcare leave	Personnel department						Proportion of men who had a child that went on childcare leave	
1.3. To inform employees about the measures related to childcare leave	Communications department						2.2%	A positive tendency, growing proportion
1.4. ...							Proportion of employees who formally requested to work on flexible working hours	
Objective No.2. To create and maintain an organisational culture that favours and ensures a healthy work-life balance	Mary Brown							
2.1. To develop guidelines and set general principles for the promotion the work-life balance in the organisation	Agnė Ugneckytė, Jonas Jonaitis						3%	A positive tendency, growing proportion
2.2. To develop a communication plan for staff and managers on the guidelines, principles, and specific measures	Communications department						Proportion of employees who used their statutory parental days off	
2.3. ...							41% of men, 31% of women	A positive tendency, a faster growth of the proportion of women
2.4. ...								
Objective No.3. ...	James Taylor							
3.1. ...								
3.2. ...								

Find time.

Calculate your work-life balance formula.

www.daugiaubalanso.it/formule



Daugiau
balanso

