

# ACHIEVING A WORK LIFE BALANCE

By Molly Gordon

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I like working with independent professionals and artists because, for us, life, work, and business exist in a nexus from which we cannot easily extract our ways of loving, relating, and making meaning. The challenges we face in business inform our personal lives and personal challenges affect our businesses.

Rich as it is, the relationship between personal and professional life can be rocky. I've been caught between the promptings of my spirit and the requirements of my business more than a few times, and I know that success formulas don't help. I also know it is possible to take care of ourselves and our businesses if we are willing to do the work.

Here are nine strategies that, taken together, can help to change course without abandoning the destination.

**1. Don't Panic.**

Even if you feel panicky, you can choose modest, recoverable steps to address the situation. This is no time to get a divorce, fire an employee, or buy a new computer system.

**2. Return To The Source.**

Whatever your spiritual orientation or tradition, connect with what for you is the Source of life or spirit. Know that there is something larger than you that encompasses you. Spend at least 15 minutes each day connecting with that Source.

**3. Take A Body Inventory.**

Are you sleeping well? How are you eating? What's your energy level? If these are not up to par, get a professional evaluation and take the steps that will restore your well being.

**4. Tell The Truth.**

Sometimes energy flags when we've gotten into a pattern of pleasing others or living according to standards that are not our own. Notice where you're being less than forthright and get clear about your motives, then clean it up. Talking to a coach or therapist can facilitate clear, authentic communication.

**5. Keep Good Company.**

Are you stimulated and encouraged by your peers and clients? Do you have great playmates? Playing on the wrong playground with the wrong kids is neither fun nor productive.

**6. Tune Up Your Thinking.**

There's substantial evidence that managing the way we think can have a profound and lasting effect on mood and motivation. See *The Bedside Table* for books you can use to tune up your cognitive skills and/or make a date with a therapist. (If you are otherwise in good psychological health a skilled coach can help, too.)

**7. Set Healthy, Flexible Boundaries.**

Yes, real life and real business are intimately connected, but that doesn't mean that you need to give up your privacy. Set boundaries so that you can feel generous without feeling depleted and available without feeling invaded. Keep them flexible, because (doncha know?) things change.

**8. Create Or Refine Systems.**

We can't manage real life and a real business without good systems. Look at where things feel most out of sorts and resolve to create or improve a system to get things on track. See the sidebar for ideas.

**9. Keep The Goal, Drop The Plan.**

Sometimes the best way to achieve a goal is to let go of our plans. Promptly and clearly revise commitments and offers as necessary to bring current activity in line with current resources. Why abandon ship when you can drop anchor while you make some repairs (or while you enjoy a few weeks in the sun!)?