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# 4 Ways to Find Work-Life Balance During the Holidays

How to juggle family, friends and work during this hectic season.



The pressure to do it all – host every party, cook every dish from scratch – can wear you down. Don't be afraid to ask for help now and then.

By [Robin Madell](#) | Dec. 23, 2014 | 10:05 a.m. EST



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'Tis the season to feel overwhelmed. The holiday months are often a time when [work and social pressures collide](#) in a way that can feel truly over the top. According to a survey by Accounting Principals, nearly 40 percent of Americans find the balance impossible this time of year and end up missing the chance to spend time with family and friends during the holidays due to work responsibilities.

"We're all trying to squeeze a month's worth of work into a few weeks so we can take time off," says business coach Amy Walker. "And we're squeezing a year's worth of social engagements into every

nonexistent free moment.”

Since you'll never find that elusive 25th hour under your Christmas tree, the next best thing is to take a more strategic approach to combating work-life imbalance over the holidays. Here are a few creative ideas to do just that:

**1. Schedule a walking meeting.** Exercise is a [proven stress buster](#), yet it's often the first thing to go during the holiday season, edged out by festivities and obligations. Maren Kate Donovan, CEO of Zirtual, notes that if you're feeling stressed from the pressures, it's a fair assumption that many of your clients and colleagues will be in the same boat.

To inject some physical activity and a breath of fresh air into jam-packed holiday work schedules, Donovan suggests inviting others to try a walking meeting instead of an in-office conversation. “Sometimes the simple act of switching up the environment and walking in stride with someone else can inspire new ideas and solutions that were not obvious before,” Donovan says. You can apply the same principle for calls with co-workers off-site, using your smartphone with headset to walk while you talk.

**2. Think of alternatives to travel.** While many people equate the holidays with cross-country flights packed like sardines, the rigmarole of holiday travel often infuses us with the [spirit of bah humbug](#). While many people feel they have to travel during the holidays to get together with extended family they don't often see, the holidays may be better spent limiting travel or calling it off completely, according to author April Masini.

“The circus ring-leader aspect of corralling a family with children to travel during the holiday high-price season is enough to warrant the purchase of an extra blood-pressure cuff to monitor spikes,” she says.

“The price of plane tickets, the opposite of joy that comes from driving a family through snowstorms and the ‘best of times, worst of times’ hotel visits or guestroom stays at a family member's home should have you reconsidering a staycation.” Masini notes that staying home for the holidays is cheaper, brings less stress and offers more control. “That's a trifecta that should have you humming Christmas carols,” she says.

**3. Don't power through it.** [Perfectionist personalities](#) may fall back on all-or-nothing thinking during the holidays, which transforms potentially fun times into misery. With so much to do in only a few short weeks (or sometimes days), you'll have to make decisions about which priorities really matter and what you need to let go.

For example, Elizabeth R. Lombardo, author of “Better Than Perfect,” recommends putting sleep needs above trying to go to every party – especially if you're feeling exhausted. “Prioritize sleep, even if it means leaving the festivities early,” she says. “Sleep deprivation will only increase your physical and psychological stress.”

Business and life coach Christy Wright agrees. “Quality, uninterrupted and unrushed time with family and friends is important,” she says. “But running around trying to make an appearance at every single party and get-together just to say you did is not.” Wright suggests choosing a few events you want to attend. Then when you attend those few events, make an effort to really be there. “Put your phone away, sit back, sip some cider and soak up the moment,” she says.

**4. Say “no” more often.** In the spirit of the holidays and giving back to others, it can be even more difficult than usual to decline requests. But Charlie Harary, professor of management and entrepreneurship at Yeshiva University's Syms School of Business in New York, notes that everything you take on when [you're too busy](#) at this time of year has a cost.

“It's hard to pass up potential opportunities, but there are some opportunities that are just not worth it,” Harary says. “Trying to satisfy clients, co-workers, friends and family can be draining and can ultimately

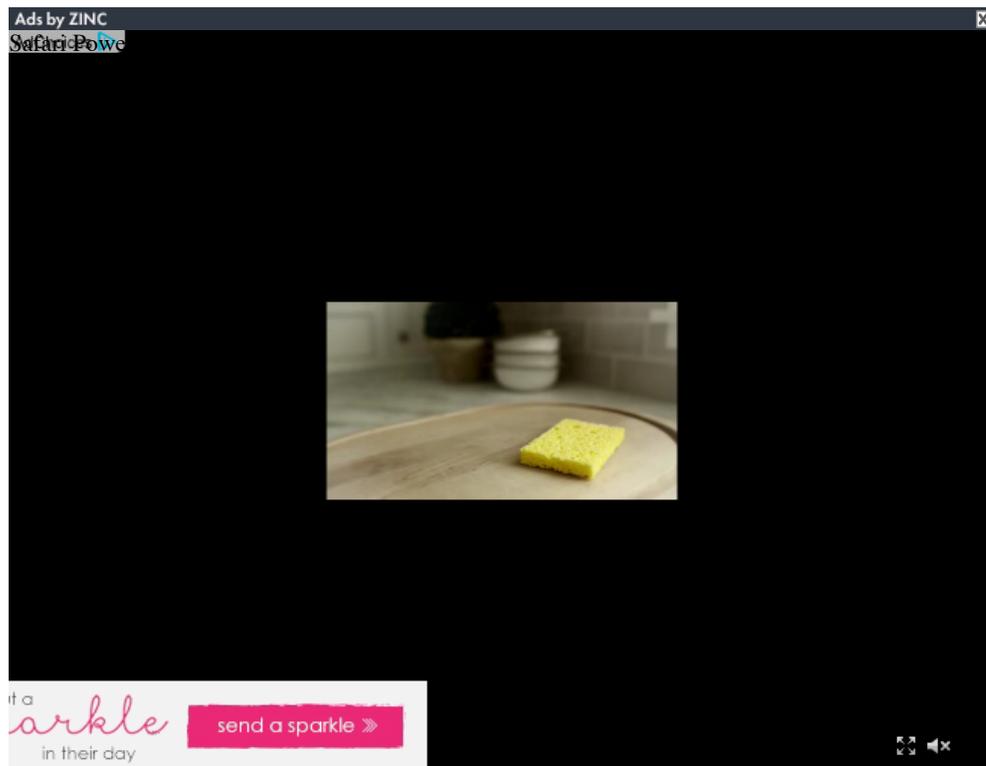
negatively impact you in many ways.”

Wright adds that while helping out is important, hosting every party, cooking every dish from scratch and having a spotless house – all while wearing the perfect outfit – is not. “Instead of bearing the burden of providing something perfect for your family and friends this season, ask for help,” Wright says.

“Have a potluck or order food instead of cooking. Draw names for gifts instead of every person buying something for every other person. When you simplify things up front, you relieve the pressure off of yourself and everyone else in the process.”

**Robin Madell** has spent more than two decades as a corporate writer, journalist and communications consultant on business, leadership, career, health, finance, technology and public-interest issues. She serves as a copywriter, speechwriter and ghostwriter for executives and entrepreneurs across diverse industries. Madell has interviewed more than 200 thought leaders around the globe, winning 20 awards for editorial excellence. She served on the board of directors of the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association in New York and San Francisco. Madell is the author of “Surviving Your Thirties: Americans Talk About Life After 30” and co-author of “The Strong Principles: Career Success.” You can reach her at robin.madell@gmail.com.

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TAGS: careers, money, holidays, work-life balance, corporate culture, New Year, Christmas, family

