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Work/Life Balance

by

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The logo for 'gee!matrix' features the word 'gee!' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, colored in a vibrant orange-red. Below the 'ee' part of the word, there is a stylized, upward-curving shape that resembles a smile or a wide 'u', also in the same orange-red color. To the right of 'gee!', the word 'matrix' is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font, colored in a muted, earthy brown.

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WORK/LIFE BALANCE

At the core of this seemingly perennial problem are those 2 aspects of our lives which for most people are greatly entwined.

Firstly there is work, enterprise, effort. The reason we drag ourselves out of bed everyday and off to our office, our car, the factory production line or the shop floor.

Secondly there is that remaining time we have each day and especially (for most people) the weekends when we reflect on what we often see as our 'real lives' – anything outside of work.

In real terms of course both of these things are part of our lives – it just depends how you see your time on earth being spent and for those who are lucky enough to find great enjoyment in their work, often the boundaries between work and life are smudged or not delineated at all.

As is usually the case with my courses and Gee!books, I will be looking at this 'problem' from 2 points of view.

1. The problem, the reality, the here and now
2. The possible solutions, the action required to make change happen

And I'll be taking you through these using the **PHOCUS** method for change.



In order for this to work I need to ask generic questions that may not always fit your circumstance precisely. If this appears to be the case for you then by all means drop me a line and we'll see if we can work through your particular issue together with a course of coaching.

So, what you are looking for are these **7** simple secrets I promised that would help you focus less on work and life and more on the balance and harmony that should ultimately lead to greater **happiness** for you, your family and your friends.

We're not talking a new religion or some weird new age philosophy here either – just some practical common sense ideas that I do try and practice myself on a daily basis.

Right then, down to business.

Work

What does this mean for you?

When you think about work do you feel pressured into an environment you'd rather not be in?

Does work include for you, the trip there and back, time also spent at home catching up or even holidays where only your family can report days out at the beach or time in the pool?

For a lot of people, 'the day job' seems to cover a whole 20 out of 24 hours at least 5 days a week and for the self employed the problem can be so intense that in fact the whole of their life is involved in work – even sleep has to be engineered into the routine of earning a living wage.

This is actually the first **learning point** in this guide.



The relationship between living, spending to live and having to somehow earn to spend is a key issue and I'd like you to spend a little time right now writing down what that relationship is for you.

How much does your life cost? (a monthly amount maybe)

How much do you earn from work – all your jobs? (your total income)

The next **learning point** is this.

When looking at your work, I want you to think about how what you do on a work day, either matches or grates against your core values.

Before you can answer that question, you need to know what your core values are so take a minute to think about these questions and see what your answers are to them.

1. Do you think chatting with your friends at work is acceptable, comes under 'teambuilding' or is in fact laziness on your part?
2. If you need pens, pencils and other stationary items do you buy them in a shop or 'borrow' them from work?
3. If you need to photocopy something do you find the cheapest shop around or do it 'free' at work?



4. If you find a wallet full of money and you're near a police station, do you hand it in full or empty of cash?
5. If you witness a fight do you try and stop it, stand there and see who wins, call the police or walk away?
6. Should there be a death penalty for crimes such as murder?

The answers will give you some clues to work out your core values.

Core values – the 'reason' why you do things the way you do.

I'm not going to go into this in a huge way, I really could write a book on it but there are already several good ones out there and in any event this is not our main purpose.

Suffice to say. If you hold 'strong' beliefs about questions 4, 5 and 6 but can't see why I'm asking the first 3 then you will more than likely be the sort of person who follows the nation's 'collective' view of life.

The sort of person who reads the tabloids or the minor broadsheets and thinks they are actually reporting news.

The sort of person who has a great many 'friends' and associates and quite possibly the sort of person who feels work is less important than life – it simply has to be endured.

If you have however found the first three questions gave you more of a dilemma and the last three were stupid questions that didn't deserve an answer then it's quite possible that you are actually far more interested in work, in doing a good job, in 'earning' your wages and that 'life' is just that bit that fits around work.



I'm being a little simplistic in respect of the generic nature of this guide but I hope even this exercise has given you some thoughts on who you think you are.

Let's go back then to our original question.

When looking at your work, I want you to think about how what you do on a work day, either matches or grates against your core values.

This is important because making some decision about this now will help us later on when we're looking at what action you can take to change your work/life balance.

In simple terms does your work interest you, excite you, bore you, worry you or even make you very angry every day that you do it?

Your answer is likely to relate to your core values – if you're doing something that fits them you are likely to find your job interesting, fun and rewarding.

If your work has nothing whatsoever to do with who you are as a person or even worse is in direct opposition to your beliefs then you are almost certainly living each day with undue stress and this may manifest itself outside the workplace as depression, anger, violence or withdrawal.

Ok, let's move on. So far we've been looking mostly at your view of work, how it forms part of or seems to be your life and what that reality means to you.

What I want to do now is have a bit of fun. Let's go back to school. Specifically, let's re-visit that awkward moment when some unnamed, usually older person asks you "what would you like to be when you grow up?"

Cast your mind back to that moment, (it may have happened on lots of occasions) and remember how you felt, what you thought and most importantly what you replied.



Did you want to be a train driver, or an air hostess?

Did you yearn to be driving racing cars for a living or to be flying jets for the air force?

Perhaps you wanted to be a nurse or a fire fighter or maybe you simply said "I don't know".

Whatever you said back then, how close to your reality is it now?

If you're not doing what you dreamed of back then, do you feel regretful or resigned to reality?

If you are doing what you dreamed of – is the reality better or worse than the dream?

This is the next **learning point.**

At some point work becomes, for many of us, just something we have to do. The glamour and the joy we experienced in our childhood dreams have no place in our reality and work has become just a job – it pays the bills, it's what we must do to get by.

Is this how you see the work element of your life?

Is this how you thought it would be?

Is this how you want it to be?

Ok. We have now touched on the first three elements of your PHOCUS on work/life balance.



To re-cap these are

P – The problem, the challenge you face, the opportunity you have to enact real change in your life.

H – Your hopes and dreams. A re-evaluation of your work (this will lead us to look at goals later) and a look at your core values and your work's relationship with them.

O – Your 'now'. The current reality that may not be all you wish it to be and the reason you've tried to find a solution.

We'll move on now to the last three elements, namely

C - The choices available to you to make change happen

U - Understanding, better knowledge and maybe skills to tackle change

S – Your task, the next steps to take – what will you do?

And finally we'll look at forming a plan so you can take some...

A C T I O N

P H O C U S and ACTION

Together these make up the 7 simple steps towards a better balance and greater harmony in your life



So, what choices do you have?

What opportunities for change are presented to you by your current circumstance?
What are your options if you want things to change?

Let's just review the answers so far. Income and Expenditure – the rewards of work and the price of life

Core Values – why you do what you do

Reality – How it is for you right now

Now that you hopefully understand, the relationship between these things, you can make some choices about the future based on

How the answers make you feel

How you now choose to view your life and this work/life balance

How you view the world around you

How you see yourself

So now there are just a few more questions on each of those things before we move on to look at some choices you could make.

How the answers make you feel

This is extremely important because how we feel about things often affects what we do about things for example

I feel hungry – we eat

I feel cold – we seek warmth



I feel hurt – we seek comfort

So in this instance, how the answers have made you feel could be a useful barometer of possible action. If you have a better understanding of how you feel, you might have more of a clue of what to do about it.

How you now choose to view your life and this work/life balance

Bearing in mind what I've just said, perhaps you'll now view your life and the balance between work and non work activities a little differently.

The exercise may have already prompted you to think to yourself

“Why am I living like this – in fact is this really living at all?” in which case, reviewing your thinking is obviously a great idea.

In so doing you are likely to either challenge the status quo or affirm your belief in what you see as ‘the right way to be’.

Either way, you are likely to feel more at ease with the situation as a result and therefore more balanced.

How you view the world around you

Once you start looking at things from a different perspective, it often helps to extend the idea to lots more than just your present knowledge of living.

As a start think about these things

To train as a doctor takes years – to go through all that and then place yourself in constant, daily danger as a volunteer for Medicins sans frontiers takes more than mere knowledge and skills – it takes commitment and courage



Live 8 may have been all about awareness and like it or loathe it, about reasonably wealthy people having a grand day out – but if one person's life has been saved on the planet because of one man's vision wasn't it worth it?

Mahatma Ghandi and Mother Theresa helped change many lives and indeed whole countries, this is extraordinary – but more amazing than that is the legacy they left behind. We can achieve great things by caring more for others than ourselves.

Those are just some things to make you think outside of your comfy little box for a minute. Whilst the main aim of this guide is to help you see your own circumstances differently, I really do subscribe to the view that the world we live on is a really big place and that your problems and mine may actually be rather insignificant in the broad scheme of things.

How you see yourself

That said, let's retain some **PHOCUS** here. This guide is all about you, about your work/life balance (or perceived lack of balance) and therefore how you see yourself is really critical in making change happen.

Again, I could write an entire book on self perception, self worth and self confidence but that's not our aim here.

For the purposes of this exercise I simply want you to do the following

Talk to yourself

Tell yourself how great you really are

Remind yourself that you are unique – you are the only you on earth

Ask yourself how you would rather live

Write things down and look at them daily.



When you look at what you've written, say it to yourself either out loud or if that feels silly, at least in your head.

You alone can decide how you wish to live.

No-one else is in charge of your life.

You can just say "I deserve to have a different life" and no-one can stop you thinking and feeling that way.

Dare to be different. Challenge the 'mould' that you have helped to create.

Take ownership of your problem and decide to look for solutions right now.

Ok. Now we've done the choices bit, and you've hopefully started to gather an understanding of your problem.

The last 2 stages of this guide are to look at some tasks you can now undertake and then to prepare for yourself a plan of action – a method which assists you in actually doing something.

The last piece of your **PHOCUS** on your work/life balance issue is the **S** that comes from task.

You must 'do' something in order for any change to happen.

Before you start worrying what to do, I would ask you to just think about what you've already done.

- You recognised a problem, your work/life had less balance than you might like.
- You found my website
- You found this guide and ordered it
- You've read it



- You've paused to think about things

So in actual fact you started the 'doing something' phase a while ago?

All you need to do now is keep the momentum going by setting yourself some specific tasks, timeframes and measures so that you can engineer more balance and harmony in your life and less misery and frustration.

To help you, here is a simple Action Plan with space to add your own questions

Questions	How do I feel now?	What is making me feel like this?	What action could I take to make me feel differently?	When will I have taken this action?	How will I know if the action has helped to change things?
Is there the right balance between work and the rest of my life?					
Do I think I'm doing the right job?					
Are there things I'd like to do in my non-work time that as yet I haven't done?					



Do I see my family/friends as much as I'd like?					

This is a start. Remember, if you get stuck, you need assistance or you just want to ask questions you can always email me at info@alangee.co.uk

Good Luck

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Alan Gee".