

## WELLNESS @ SHAW

THE  
ShawTalk

SUPPLEMENT TO DECEMBER 2008 SHAWPTALK

*To celebrate just over a year of covering all things 'wellness' in Shawptalk, we've created a special pullout section. We hope you'll enjoy seeing photos and reading stories of your co-workers in their pursuit of work-life balance. And we hope you'll refer back to it often!*

In the circus of life, you're in charge of the ...

## Balancing Act!

**What does** the term "work-life balance" mean to you? Does it conjure up a teeter-totter massively weighted down on the work side, with the life end floating off in space, untended? Or is it something you can check off on your to-do list?

The notion of having to balance work with the rest of your life is definitely a twentieth-century phenomenon, and probably more of a North American one. Other world citizens seem to have a better balance of work and play. Just look at some European cultures that allow for extra-long lunches and even naps in the afternoon.

For this Wellness supplement, we thought we'd turn to an expert for some guidance. Lara Morris is a coach and facilitator who works with individuals, groups, and organizations. Over the years, she's helped many people achieve more balance between their work and the rest of their lives. "Work-life balance is a state of well-being," says Lara. "It's a sense that you can effectively handle all your responsibilities

— whether that's at work, at home or in your community — and that you can do that without feeling overwhelmed."

In particular, work-life balance is having a sense that your work is not all consuming. "It means that you have other ways that you are engaged or involved in your life and these things give you a sense of balance." Having time with your kids, having time

Work-life balance is a ... sense that you can effectively handle all your responsibilities.

—Lara Morris, coach and facilitator

to yourself, having dates with your spouse (now that's a novel concept!) — Lara stresses that these activities are different for different people, depending on what your interests are and the number of responsibilities you have.



## NO REST FOR THE WICKED

“Work is the kind of thing that’s never done, so it’s easy to like you’re going under if your sole focus is work.” Lara says this is particularly true if you work long hours or have a stressful job. “If there’s nothing to balance that out – no other ways of spending your time that are pleasurable and rewarding and that make you feel engaged – then that whole sense of being out of balance can become stronger.”

One thing that Lara has seen over and over is people with demanding or stressful jobs pouring everything they have into work. “At the end of the day, they’re really wiped out and feel like they don’t have energy to do anything but watch TV.” Put up your

hands if you’ve done that – I think we’ve all been there!

But, according to Lara, passively watching TV won’t re-invigorate you. In fact, it’s the one thing that’s going to further zap your energy. “If instead you go home and you have some sort of exercise routine or you go out for coffee



## TAKING ON PERSONAL WELLNESS CHALLENGES

Many employees have set themselves goals to improve their health or fitness. Above, Prestige’s Wallace Mallery trained for and participated in the Honolulu Marathon in December 2006 and raised \$6200 for the Canadian Diabetes Association at the same time. Centre, Eastern Embers’s Ken “Tiny” McFadden butted out a 40-year smoking habit. At right, Spurgeon McLean of Prestige, with son Mark, shows off what isn’t there – 120 pounds!



We will all have more to o families, our communiti our workplaces if we liv balanced lives. —Lara

with a friend or practice playing guitar or go to an art class – you’re engaging in a way that is different from work and might meet one of your other interests or needs.”

How many readers have ever experienced any of the following: feeling out of control, feeling like you can’t possibly get everything done, procrastinating, not returning phone calls, waking up with your heart already racing? If so, these could be signs that your sense of work-life balance is out of whack.

## QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

But all is not lost. “My experience with my clients has been that most people can achieve work-life balance,” says Lara. “It just takes a little effort.” One of the common misconceptions is that in order to have a balance between work and life you need to cut hours off your work day. Not so. “It’s not about the time. It’s about the quality of the time.”

This might mean taking a break in the middle of the day to go for a 10-minute walk. “You’d be amazed how powerful a few minutes spent outside moving around can be,” says Lara. “It gives you the opportunity to clear your head, gain

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some perspective, get some fresh air, and come back to work ready to be more effective.” This is especially true if your job requires you to either sit for long periods or do repetitive motions. “Get your body moving. That’s so

important for a sense of balance. We’re balancing not just work and life but our bodies and our minds.”

Taking your vacation time is also important. In addition to the fun of sitting by the pool, walking on the beach, or enjoying a refreshing cold drink, you’re also giving yourself an opportunity to step away and gain some much needed perspective. “I think one of the main ways we get out of balance is that we just get caught up in the every day. If the every day is a demanding job, then it’s easy to lose perspective. Having vacation time can be a really important way to come up for air and check in on the rest of your life.”

## WHAT’S GOTTA GIVE?

Philip Atwell understands this concept. The wash plant operator at Keddy Aggregates, who works

10-hour days, tries to take time every few weeks to go fishing. It’s his way of getting away from it all. “When I think about balance, I think about three different things – my work, my family, and then my own time for things that I want to do.” Philip breaks the three into separate entities and makes sure he spends time in each area. Of course it’s not always equal time. “Work takes up a lot of time but I try not to let it

cut into my other time as well.”

After twenty-plus years of work, he’s learned some valuable lessons about the importance of having other things in your life and not making work your primary focus.

“If your whole life is your work and



## HAVING FUN AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

*Playing and socializing with co-workers can open the way for better relationships and more fun on the job. Throwing recreation and a change of scene into meetings and conferences keeps people fresh and engaged.*

*Above – In early 2006 Clayton staff bowled with construction industry teams in support of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Their outfits outshone their scores, but that made more fun for everyone.*

*At left, from the top – Shaw Resources sponsored a team to compete in the recreational division of an invitational hockey tournament organized by MacTara Forest Products in March 2006 and 2007. The first year, they won!*

*JOHSCs meeting in Wolfville in May 2007 took time out for a walk on the area’s dykes.*

*In February 2008 Brick’s Masonry Centres held a regional meeting of staff and sales reps in order to become better acquainted with the products – and with each other at events like an evening curling lesson.*



things don't go the way you think they should, you'll probably end up pretty unhappy." Philip adds that there's also a tendency to take things too seriously and get focused on the negative. He's been there before and in the past has left work feeling frustrated or angry.

"Over the years, I feel like I've figured it out and I don't let it bother me quite so much," says Philip. "If you make work the centre of your life, I think you're missing out on a lot by not focusing on what you want or need." For him, the secret is attitude. "If you stop focusing on everything that's wrong and all the problems, and start looking at yourself, then things fall into place."

### HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY MIND

Bill MacIntyre agrees. The Development Administrator at Clayton Developments believes that he needs to look after himself in order to be his best at work and at home. Achieving a balance of what others need from him and what he needs is key to his general health. "For me, it means making a conscious effort to include all the important things in my life and allocate time to each."

With two young children, family time is high on Bill's priority list, but he also makes time for a daily fitness regime. He's committed to running and working out before work every day. This means getting up at 5:30am! "Healthy eating is also important for me to feel balanced, so I make an effort to be selective when I shop for groceries and cook meals."

### GET CLEAR, SET INTENTIONS, AND TAKE ACTION!

Doing what Bill and Philip have done – figuring out what they need and want – is key to achieving work-life balance. "Take some time to get clear on what's important to you in terms of work and the rest of your life," suggests Lara. "Ask yourself how you want to spend your time and then attempt to make some changes." Lara suggests small, intentional steps will go a long way.

That's exactly what Sonia Watson has done. The new Divisional Coordinator at Shaw Resources has definitely put her job and her family first, but it doesn't mean she's left herself behind. She makes sure to go to a yoga class once a week, occasionally goes out with friends, and volunteers her time with the Hemophilia Society. And at work, she takes advantage of the weekly "Healthy Living Lunch Meetings" at the Lantz site. "Sometimes I feel a little over-extended but that's all a part of having younger kids. You have to constantly juggle your routine and your schedule to fit their needs."

According to Lara, being able and willing to juggle in order to find those activities and experiences that will positively affect your life is vitally important. "We will all have more to offer our families, our communities, and our workplaces if we live more balanced lives."

"The more engaged and balanced you are," she continues, "the more likely you are to affect someone else in a positive way."



### FAMILY TIME, FAMILY TIES

*Making time for family is important. Apple-picking isn't the only way of spending quality family time, but both Bill MacIntyre of Clayton and Sonia Watson at Resources head for the orchard with their children in apple season.*

You can spread the good cheer. Just as we can all latch onto the negative, we can equally latch onto the positive too. If you're being more positive in your workplace, it can only help."