



Boston's Work-Life Balance

Lessons

by Peter Hamill, Lisa Ballantyne and Kent Kunkel

A few years ago we realized that many of our Boston business unit employees were struggling to maintain a true balance between life and work. Our subsequent efforts to help them achieve that balance taught us two lessons:

1. *Employees have to truly want a balanced life.*
2. *They need assistance from a corporate culture that supports their efforts to enjoy a healthy balance between work and life.*

We are fortunate that Turner not only realizes the importance of balance, but also works to help all of us achieve it. Even so, as we've been exploring this issue in our unit, we've discovered that one of our biggest problems is the example we set as managers at all levels. We sometimes forget that good or bad, managers are work-life balance role models.

Here are some of the suggestions we're giving our managers – 85% of our staff – about how to be more respectful of everyone's right to have a

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Stop Worrying and Start Thinking

Worry smothers many of the magic moments that make each day worth living. The good news is that you can stop worrying and start living a less stressed, more enjoyable life right now.

There are things in life that should concern and sometimes stress you. Worrying about them, however, won't help.

Worry causes physical and psychological stresses that will reduce both the quality and length of your life. Conversely, ending worry will add years of joy to your life.

To end worry it is important to distinguish between worrying and thinking. Often you may think you are doing one when in fact you are doing the other.

worry (v. 1.) to feel or cause to feel uneasy or troubled.

think (v. 1.) to determine by a specific reasoning process; to reason to a conclusion.

Look back over these definitions. Do you see the difference?

Worry is a negative emotional state. Thinking is a rational process. One has a negative outcome, the other positive.

Worry is the state of mentally vibrating back and forth in a depressing buzz. It is not only unproductive; most of the time it is counterproductive. It is action to avoid.

Since worry does not lead to a reasoned conclusion, it provides none of the benefits of thinking.

Many senior executives have told me that prior to making this distinction they believed they were great thinkers. Afterwards, they realized they were mostly worriers.

WORRY IS NOT THINKING!

When you think, you use a rational mental process to solve problems or determine actions. To think productively you must be reasoning to a conclusion.

Stop Worrying

fulfilling life outside of work:

- **Become more aware.** Managers need to realize that their personal behavior and management style almost always influence the success of those employees who are trying to achieve a better work-life balance.

- **Lead by example.** Even if your personal schedule allows you to work from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. without causing yourself problems, take your early morning and evening work off-site so your staff doesn't feel pressured to match your time on the job. Promote the philosophy: "When you're done, be done."

- **Make sure people are working effectively and efficiently.** This starts with ensuring that all employees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Provide training when needed to improve skills. Use management guidance to uncover hidden time wasters.

- **Be aware of the rhythms of life.** If you're calling staff on a cell phone on your way home from work, ask first if that individual has arrived home yet. If they have, talk tomorrow instead. If you send an e-mail on the weekend and don't need a response until Monday, say so. Try to avoid scheduling early morning and late evening meetings.

- **Help people recharge with vacations.** Actively manage your

So to replace negative outcomes with positive ones, **stop worrying and start thinking.**

This is not hard, but neither will it happen automatically. You need to periodically set aside brief amounts of **Think Time** for important issues that concern you. Then you must make sure that your Think Time does not turn into worry time.

Rethinking your life every day is just another form of worry. Don't get up every morning and rethink major decisions. Instead, set aside on your calendar a specific time, on a specific day, to thoroughly think through a major issue.

Make sure you come to a conclusion. **Then don't think about it again for 3 months** unless a MAJOR new piece is added to your picture.

How to Use Your Think Time

1. *Bring all the information to bear that you have available and make the best decision you can.*

Take all the pieces of the issue that concern you and write them down on a piece of paper. This helps you see your challenge and your choices more clearly. Make the best decision you can, given the information you have. That may be to take an action for change. Or it may be to do nothing different at this time.

2. *Then block another think time in your calendar three months out to evaluate where you are with this issue again.*

Do not think about it again until your next scheduled think date or until some significant new piece of information presents itself to you.

This helps avoid being caught in a daily Worry Trap about a life issue that is bugging you.

"Should I stay in this job?" "Should I change careers?"
"Should I talk to my boss about this?"

Or it may be personal: "Should I stay in this relationship?"
"Should we stay in this house?" "Am I doing the right thing?"

Getting up every day and rethinking (really re-worrying) is a worry trap that will drive you to an early grave.

3. *When you take your thinking time, do not abandon your thinking process before you: a) arrive at a conclusion, and*

staff's vacation schedule by introducing mandatory vacation planning at the start of each calendar year. This will help protect much-needed (but not always used) vacation time on their calendars.

These kinds of cultural changes take time, but we're making progress in Boston. Our challenge is to bring awareness to those employees and managers who are directly and indirectly influencing employee success with this issue. Our goal is to get our managers and employees working together to help us reach the right balance for each individual.

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-- Stress Tips for Today

- **Train your brain to focus on what can go right** - not what can go wrong. This is a great habit that you can develop with practice.
- **Dwell a little while on the pleasant** events, people or objects that are part of your day.
- **Mentally celebrate your little and big successes.** Again, dwell on them a little WHEN THEY HAPPEN.
- **Learn from negatives but do**

b) clearly commit to a change or to keeping the status quo.

"I will stay where I am right now, given the pros and cons of changing. I've written in my calendar to think about this again in three months. At that time I'll evaluate if anything has happened to change my decision."

When you are tempted to worry yourself by thinking about it sooner, say, "No, I thoroughly thought through that last month, and nothing significant has changed since then. I know I'm going to think through it again next month. There is nothing to be accomplished by thinking about it again now."

4. If from your Think Time you conclude that action is required, write in your calendar when you will start that action.

Write down the specific thing you will do. "Monday 8 a.m. Call John to set appointment to discuss."

Continue to write in a calendar on a specific day the subsequent actions to implement your thinking conclusions. **Do not** rethink your direction unless relevant new pieces are added. If they are, then schedule some additional Think Time.

Does replacing worrying with thinking make all your major stress issues go away instantly? No. But you stress less and act more knowing you have come to your most reasoned conclusions with the information available to you at the time.

It is a simple process. Next time you catch yourself worrying about anything, STOP YOURSELF! Is it a little thing? Then stop worrying. It's not worth the effort.

Is it a big thing? Then immediately schedule 30 minutes of Think Time to reach a conclusion based on the information you now have and stop worrying.

When you stop worrying and start thinking you change your plans, actions and life for the better.

In the next newsletter we will cover a method to accomplish more in 15 minutes of Think Time than most people accomplish in months of typical re-thinking, re-worry time.

Until then, keep Achieving and Enjoying, every day!

Jim Bird, Publisher

not dwell on them. When they occur you should think about why they occurred and how to avoid them in the future. But once done, that's it. Move on.

- **Notice things to smile about.** Think right now about something that makes you smile.

Quotes from Dale Carnegie

"It isn't what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about."

"Remember, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday."

"First ask yourself: What is the worst that can happen? Then prepare to accept it. Then proceed to improve the worst."

"Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage."

Dale Carnegie (1888-1955) was a pioneer in self-improvement and became famous for courses he developed that emphasized public speaking and interpersonal skills. He wrote How to Win Friends and Influence People which was first published in 1937. It has sold over 10 million copies and remains popular today.

To view the Four Life Quadrants click here: [Big Picture](#)

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