

The Importance of Developing and Maintaining a Healthy Work/Life Balance When You Have Physical and Mental Health Conditions



Hello from the Transitions ACR! I'm back again to discuss my personal experience with both medical and mental health conditions. For those of you who missed my last blog, you can catch up [here](#). As a recap, I'm a young adult research staff at the Transitions ACR. I often use my lived experience with a mental health condition to help shape our research. My last blog entry discussed using work as a tool for recovery. This month's hot topic is work/life balance!

I'm passionate about work/life balance because it has been one of the key solutions for maintaining my job as well as my recovery. I believe it's an essential component of wellness in the workplace. Maintaining this balance is an ongoing, every day process, and I find that I'm always learning new strategies along the way.

The first strategy I follow is to integrate my work and personal life. For example, when I come to work I don't have the option of leaving my illnesses at home. I must make the necessary arrangements to manage "life" at work. This will look different for everyone, even among those who share similar diagnoses. One way I do this is by having a flexible schedule that allows me to take breaks in the day for treatment-related needs.

The second strategy I practice is not overdoing it. I struggled with this for years. I agreed to work more than I could, which resulted in me needing to call out from overdoing it, as well as increased hospitalizations. Over time my chronic mental and physical health conditions have shown me the importance of prioritizing how I expend my often limited time and energy. There's a fine line between seizing the moment and pushing myself to the point of it being counterproductive. Being open and honest with my employer, treatment providers, and personal supports has been instrumental in knowing when to push myself and when to rest.



The last strategy I regularly practice is to not be so hard on myself. I've had to accept that I cannot always function at my optimal performance level and that's okay. Adjusting my tasks accordingly has been helpful in that sense.

Achieving a successful work/life balance is a nonlinear process. Sometimes I take two steps forward and then one step back. There's no such thing as perfection, so this will be an ongoing process involving self-awareness, adapting, tweaking and acceptance. I encourage you all to be mindful of your own wellness as we continue through 2019!