Success Center

Directed Learning Activity (DLA)

# Balancing Work and Home

CTE001.1

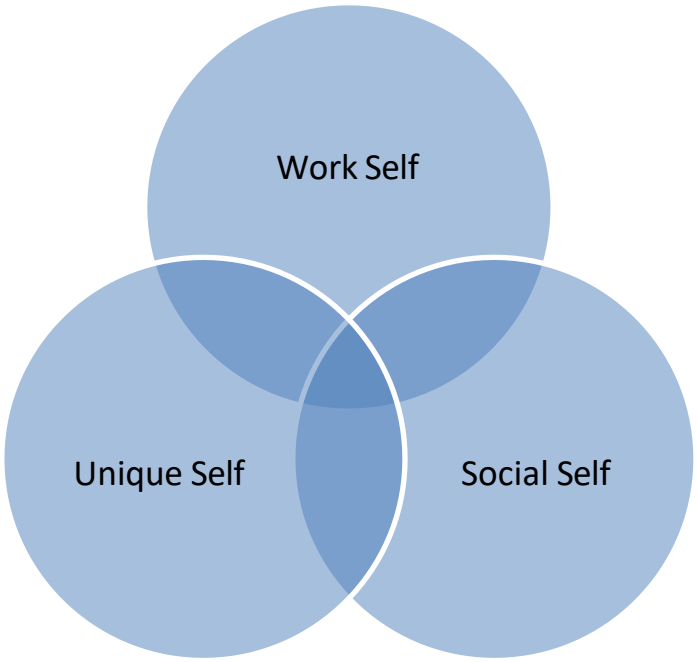
## Directed Learning Activity – Career and Technical Education 1: Balancing Work and Home

**Description:** ***What does it mean to strive for*** **work-home balance?** ***All of us play a variety of roles in our lives. Each role carries its own set of responsibilities, which often compete for our limited time and attention. When*** **work-home balance** ***is achieved, there is a sense that enough attention is being given to the people and responsibilities that matter most to us.***

**Purpose:** ***Why is it important to achieve*** **work-home balance?** ***Whatever roles we play, we are expected to be productive in them. We try to strike a balance between competing roles so we can meet the most important responsibilities of each. We want to be balanced so that we can do a good job, be productive in all of our roles, and control our levels of stress.***

**Step One: Thinking About the "Three Spheres" of Our Lives**

Once we begin to work, most of us have three crucial aspects of our lives. These can be visualized as three overlapping "spheres." Each of these spheres represents one of our three "selves." The **work self** gives us a sense of focus and mastery, as well as a place to contribute. The **social self** is about our relationships with our family members and friends. The **unique self** reflects our interests, talents, self care, and on-going education. In order to achieve a **work-home balance**, we need all three of these spheres to feel balanced (although they do not necessarily have to be equal all the time).




**Which of your spheres get short-changed most often – your work self, your social self, or your unique self?**

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**Why are you not paying proper attention to this aspect of your life?**

**Step Two: Asking Ourselves Questions – About our "Selves"**

Whenever we think that we do not have an appropriate work-home balance, that at least one of the three spheres in our lives is being short-changed, we can start the process of establishing one by asking ourselves a couple questions – and answering them honestly.

**What is making it difficult to balance the three spheres of your life – your work self, your social self, and your unique self?**

**What needs to change so you can achieve a better balance between the three spheres of your life?**

**Step Three: Establishing Priorities and Taking Control of Our Lives**

Managing our respective time and energy becomes easier when we know what our priorities are. This means asking ourselves questions throughout the day that will give us guidance in how we spend our day.

We are the ones who should decide how much time and energy we are willing to invest in each activity, responsibility, or person in our lives. The questions, then, that we should ask ourselves are: *What is the best use of my time right now? How much time and energy should I invest in this?*

**What is an example of an activity that you have engaged in during this past week that was not the best use of your time at that moment?**

**In hindsight, how much time and energy should you have invested in that activity?**

**In retrospect, what was something else that you should have invested that time and energy in instead – something you should have prioritized over the other activity?**

**Step Four: Setting Limits and Delegating to Others**

Before saying "yes" to a request to invest our time and energy, we should first ask ourselves if it fits our priorities, will help us reach our goals, or will bring satisfaction to our lives. Often, the best response is to tell the person making that request that we will think about it and get back to them.

Sometimes, the best strategy is to delegate some responsibilities – that is, entrust them to someone else who has the time and energy to devote to the task. We need to understanding that we can't do it all. Everyone needs help. We just have to learn how to ask for it. When we delegate, we need to identify people who are capable of taking on a task, teach them how to do it, and then let go of it.

**What is one of your responsibilities that you could conceivably delegate to someone else?**

**Who might be capable of taking on that task? What would you need to teach that person in order for him or her to be able to accomplish it?**

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**Step Five: Communicating Our Needs to Others**

Effectively communicating with people can help us get our needs met. We need to tell them what we need and keep the doors of communication open. One way we can do this is by using **"I" Statements** to send messages without blaming or criticizing.

**What would you like to communicate? For practice, complete these sentences:**

**"I need you to_____."**

**"I would appreciate it if you would_____."**

**"I would like it if you would_____."**

**"When you_____, I feel_____."**

**Step Six: Looking at the Life of Someone Who Is Not Yet Balancing Work and Home**

To develop a better understanding of the challenges of balancing work and home, read the following case study, then answer the questions that follow the scenario.

**Case Study – Balancing Work and Home Life**

Recently, the auto body shop where Jenny works had to lay-off five workers. They kept Jenny, which was fortunate for her because she is a single mother and the sole provider for her daughter. With fewer employees, Jenny is busier; she now falls behind on the paperwork required by the insurance companies for reimbursement.

Before she leaves work today, she realizes how many reports have piled up. One way to get caught up is to take the reports home, which is not really allowed, but, today, she is rushing to get her daughter, Yvette, to a soccer game. Jenny sees herself finishing at least some of the files while she watches the game. She's taken reports home before; so, once again, she grabs a stack of files, puts them in her bag, and rushes out the door.

With her daughter in the car, she races against the clock. The last time Yvette was a few minutes late for warm up, her coach kept her out for the first half. Her daughter is still angry at the coach, and Jenny thinks it was unfair, too. As she pulls up to the soccer field, she sees Yvette's team already running drills. Yvette slowly gets her bag, climbs out of the car, and walks to the field.

Jenny isn't expecting her daughter to play much in this game. She sets up her lawn chair, puts her computer on her lap, and starts working. Occasionally, she looks up to see her daughter sitting, sadly, on the bench. Jenny's concentration is broken by shouting and clapping. She looks up in time to see her daughter's teammates jumping up and down and hugging her. Yvette has scored a goal, but Jenny didn't see it. After the game, Yvette hardly talks to her.

The next morning, Jenny leaves the house a little late. She stayed up late, finishing her work and trying to fix things with Yvette. She gets to work on time, puts her things down and finds a Post-It Note on her desk. Her supervisor needs one of the files Jenny took home. Jenny goes to her bag and realizes she left the files at home. As a result, everyone in the auto shop office will have to delay some part of their work until the missing files are returned.

**Step Seven: Applying What We Have Learned to Help Balance Jenny's Life – And Our Own Lives**

Now that you have read the case study, answer the following questions.

**Jenny is performing two roles: parent and employee. Which role seems to be Jenny's priority? Why do you feel this way?**

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**What are the consequences of not maintaining work-home balance for Jenny?**

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**Of the strategies discussed in Steps One through Five – for example, establishing priorities, setting limits, delegating to others, or communicating needs to others – which would you recommend Jenny to use in order to establish a better balance between her responsibilities at home and at work? Why?**

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**What are some of the roles you play at work and at home?**

**What are examples of situations in which the responsibilities associated with your roles conflict with each other? What strategies have you attempted to use in order to balance them?**

**Describe a specific experience you have had trying to balance work and home. Were you able to achieve that balance in that instance? Why or why not?**

**Of the strategies discussed in Steps One through Five – for example, establishing priorities, setting limits, delegating to others, or communicating needs to others – which might you try to use in order to establish a better balance between your responsibilities at home and at work? Why?**

**PRINT STUDENT NAME** **STUDENT #**

**Tutor Feedback:**

**For Follow Up**

_____The student discussed the self-reflective questions in Steps One through Five with the instructor/tutor.

_____The student thoughtfully answered the seven questions following the case study and was able to explain their reasoning to the instructor/tutor.

_____The student identified an example of role conflict in his or her personal life and articulated a strategy for attempting to achieve some balance between work and home.

Additional Comments:

**PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME** **DATE**

**INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE**