

## Warm up

In pairs, look at the pictures and answer the following questions.



picture 1



picture 2



picture 3



picture 4

1. How many hours per week do you typically spend working? Do you think this is above or below average? Why?
2. What is the first thing you usually do when you finish work at the end of the week?
3. Are you able to stop thinking about work in your free time? Why/Why not?
4. What activities do you usually do to relax?
5. Would you like to have more free time? Why/Why not? What would you do with it if so?

## Work-life balance

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## Understanding the introduction

You are going to listen to a business person talking about managing free time. Number the extracts from the introduction in order from 1-8. The first one has been done for you.

Watch the first section of the video (00:00 - 01:07) to check your answers.

Now, find a word or phrase from the introduction that matches each definition.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ an event that stops something else happening for a period of time
2. \_\_\_\_\_ not something which is important
3. \_\_\_\_\_ significant or large
4. \_\_\_\_\_ something growing beyond its desired limits
5. \_\_\_\_\_ to make something weaker
6. \_\_\_\_\_ to get people to join a group or an organization
7. \_\_\_\_\_ emotionally significant

## Focus on vocabulary

Part A: Match the words to the definitions.

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>burnout</u> (n)        | a. a feeling of being completely exhausted and unable to perform physically or mentally, usually because of working too much |
| 2. <u>productive</u> (adj.)  | b. a way of measuring something, often performance   |
| 3. <u>boundary</u> (n)       | c. completing a lot of tasks   |
| 4. <u>uphold</u> (v)         | d. felt very strongly  |
| 5. <u>accountable</u> (adj.) | e. give someone the space or the ability to do something   |
| 6. <u>metric</u> (n)         | f. give the authority to do something  |
| 7. <u>profound</u> (adj.)    | g. responsible for a task or a decision  |
| 8. <u>empower</u> (v)        | h. support something   |
| 9. <u>accommodate</u> (v)    | i. the limit of what is and isn't acceptable behavior for someone  |

## Watching for details

Watch the rest of the video (01:07 - 05:05) and decide which of the following pieces of advice the business person gives.

1. Spend 15 minutes sitting quietly after work to separate work from your free time. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Treat your weekend as if it was a vacation. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Make sure you get some exercise during the workday. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you are not available, ask colleagues to only contact you in an emergency. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you are able to, move a Monday deadline to a Tuesday afternoon to protect your weekend. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Create a list of what you need to do the next day before you leave work. \_\_\_\_\_

## Talking point

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. Why do you think it is that some people work really long hours and have little personal time?
2. In your opinion, are there problems with work/life balance at your workplace? Why/Why not?
3. Does your company do anything that helps its employees address the problems of stress and burnout? What are they?
4. What did you think about the suggestions that were made in the video? Were they useful to you? Why/Why not?
5. What other suggestions can you think of which would help someone have a healthier balance of work and life?

## Phrases in context

In pairs, discuss the meaning of the underlined words and phrases in the following sentences.

1. I think burnout is far more likely in this always-on culture that we live in.
2. I spent too much time working when I was younger and got short-changed on time with my children and my family.
3. A lot of people left the company in the wake of the restructuring and the impact it had on relationships.
4. For people to be able to be productive, I think it's important to reframe how we think about time off.
5. Employees who proactively look for feedback and confirmation do better with some managers than others.
6. My ability to focus has been really fractured lately, and it's affecting my productivity.

### Read the writing task.

You receive an email from a friend that talks about his work life. Read the following extract and write a reply giving them advice about the situation.

Work, however, is very hard. I like my job, but I work long days, frequently going in before 8 am and often staying until after 6 or 7. I often don't see the kids during the week because they are either too tired or already in bed when I get home. Vanessa and I haven't been communicating very well. She gets annoyed because I'm always checking my phone for emails at the table or reading reports in bed. I know I shouldn't do it, but if I leave work alone for too long, I worry that I might be missing something important. I even sometimes get up early on the weekend to do a little work before the family gets up so I won't be stressed when we spend time together. Honestly, I'm exhausted. I don't know how much longer I can keep this up.

### You should:

- Write at least 250 words.
- Check your grammar, spelling, and punctuation



## Working with words | Work–life balance

- 1 Why should employers care about their employees' work–life balance?
- 2 Read the extract of a company's terms and conditions for its employees. Choose the correct heading for each section.
  - Family and health
  - Working hours
  - Holiday

### Terms and conditions of employment

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
The company operates a system of flexitime. All employees must be at work during the core hours of between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. but they can start and finish work between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Employees must take their lunch break anytime between midday and 2 p.m. and this should not be less than 30 minutes long. Paid overtime must be done outside of the flexible working hours (e.g. before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.) and agreed in writing by your manager. The company also allows home-working (where appropriate to the employee's roles and responsibilities) for up to a maximum of eight hours on one day a week. Requests to work from home must be made in writing to your manager.

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Full-time employees receive 25 working days' holiday (not including public holidays) in a calendar year. Annual leave for part-time staff is calculated

according to the number of days worked per year. After five years of service, an employee can take an extra two days' leave per year. Managers may accept requests for additional leave depending on your circumstances.

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Expectant mothers can take up to 52 weeks' maternity leave at the following rates: 12 weeks of full pay, 27 weeks of statutory pay and an additional 13 weeks of unpaid leave. Fathers can take two weeks off for paternity leave at any time between the child's birth until eight weeks afterwards.

For sick leave, employees receive full pay for a short-term illness up to 28 days. For longer-term illness, employees with over 24 months' service will receive full pay for up to six months. Employees with under 24 months' service receive statutory pay after 28 days. A medical certificate is required from your doctor if you are absent for more than five days.

- 3 Do you think these terms and conditions provide a good work–life balance for employees? Why/Why not?

**4** Look for compound words in the text and match them to definitions 1–10.

- 1 A system of working a particular number of hours each week or month but choosing when you start and finish. \_\_\_\_\_ *flexitime*
- 2 The times when you always have to work. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Time at work in addition to your normal hours. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Not working in your office but at your house. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 The number of days off for holidays per year. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Extra days off. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 An official rate of pay according to the law. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Time off with no money. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Time off for men to spend time with a new baby. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 All your normal salary. \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Read a new employee's questions to their manager. Using the terms and conditions in the text in **2**, what will the manager reply?

- 1 Can I start work earlier in the day so I finish by five o'clock?
- 2 I'd like to finish work every day at three-thirty. Is that possible?
- 3 How long can I take for lunch?
- 4 I worked until eight last night. Do I get paid anything extra?
- 5 January 1st is a public holiday, but is it part of my normal holiday?
- 6 Does everyone get the same amount of annual leave?
- 7 My wife is having a baby next month. Can I take some time off when it's born?
- 8 Sorry I was off sick yesterday. Do I still get paid?

**6** Work with a partner.

**Student A:** You are a new employee at Student B's company. Ask the questions in **5**.

**Student B:** Student A is a new employee at your company. Answer their questions with true answers for your company.

**7** Now change roles and repeat **6**. Afterwards, compare your answers.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 2** on page 108.

**8** ▶ **2.1** Listen to two people talking about their company and their work-life balance. Make notes on each question in the table.

What is good about the work-life balance at your company?
Speaker 1:
Speaker 2:
What don't you like about the system?
Speaker 1:
Speaker 2:
What would you change about it?
Speaker 1:
Speaker 2:

**9** Work with a partner. Discuss the three questions in **8** for you and your company.