

Work, Life & Recovery Balance

Sustainable balance framework

Printable worksheet · 5 parts

Name _____ Date _____

Building a Sustainable Life on the Foundation of Recovery

Embrace, Empower & Evolve — The Recovery Files

Work

Professional life

Life

Personal & relational

Recovery

Sobriety & growth

Reading Sections

Self-Assessment

Worksheets & Exercises

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10 interactive exercises available after completing readings and assessment

Export Your Progress

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PART 1 OF 5

What Is Work, Life, and Recovery Balance?

Work, life, and recovery balance refers to the equilibrium between your professional responsibilities, your personal life, and the demands of maintaining sobriety and mental health. For people in early addiction recovery, this balance is not a luxury — it is a survival necessity.

Balance does not mean equal time. True balance is about alignment — ensuring that your time and energy distribution reflects your actual values, supports your recovery, and produces a life that feels sustainable.

Think of balance like a three-legged stool. Work is one leg, personal life is another, and recovery is the third. If any leg is significantly shorter than the others, the stool becomes unstable.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the "three-legged stool" metaphor resonate with your current experience? Which leg is longest, and which is shortest?

2. Have you been overcommitting to one domain at the expense of the others?

3. What does "balance" mean to you personally in your daily life right now?

4. How has the pressure to "prove yourself" affected your ability to maintain balance?

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how balanced does your life feel right now?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5**Work-Related Imbalance**

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I frequently work beyond my scheduled hours or take work home with me
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I feel guilty or anxious when I am not working or being productive
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. Work stress significantly impacts my mood, sleep, or physical health
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I have difficulty saying no to additional work responsibilities even when I am overwhelmed
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I neglect recovery activities (meetings, therapy, step work) because of work demands
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I use busyness or work as a way to avoid dealing with feelings or recovery issues
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. My work performance has suffered because of recovery-related fatigue, appointments, or emotional challenges
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I feel that my job defines my worth — that without professional success, I am not enough
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

PART 2 OF 5

Why Balance Matters: The Recovery Cost of Imbalance

Imbalance is not just uncomfortable — it is dangerous. For people in early recovery, chronic imbalance creates the exact conditions that make relapse more likely: elevated stress, emotional depletion, social isolation, resentment, and erosion of recovery practices.

The stress mechanism is most direct. When work consumes all available energy, the nervous system stays in fight-or-flight, sleep quality declines, emotional regulation deteriorates, and the brain begins to crave relief.

Every mechanism is preventable through consistent, imperfect practice of monitoring your balance, adjusting your commitments, protecting your boundaries, and maintaining recovery practices.

Reflection Questions

1. Which imbalance mechanism resonates most strongly with your current experience?

2. Have you noticed the vicious cycle where work stress leads to recovery neglect?

3. What resentments are building in your life because of imbalance?

4. How diversified is your "identity portfolio"?

5. Have you experienced any warning signs of burnout?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Personal Life & Relationship Neglect

Scale: 1 = of

I frequently cancel personal plans or family commitments due to work or recovery obligations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. My closest relationships feel strained because I am not emotionally or physically present

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I struggle to engage in hobbies, leisure, or activities that bring me genuine joy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I feel isolated from friends and family because of the demands of recovery and/or work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have difficulty relaxing and being "off" — there is always something I feel I should be doing

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I neglect basic self-care (nutrition, sleep, exercise, hygiene) because there is not enough time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I feel resentful toward the people or commitments that demand my time and energy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My social life has significantly contracted since entering recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

PART 3 OF 5

The Power of Boundaries: Protecting What Matters Most

Boundaries are the infrastructure of balance. Without clear, communicated, and consistently maintained boundaries, balance is impossible.

A boundary is not a wall. A boundary is a door with a clear policy about when it opens and when it stays closed. It communicates what you need, what you can offer, and where the limits are.

The skill of boundary-setting involves three capacities: clarity (knowing what you need), communication (expressing it directly and respectfully), and consistency (maintaining the boundary even when it is tested).

Reflection Questions

1. What boundaries do you currently have in place? How consistently are you maintaining them?

2. Where are you overcompensating? What fear is driving it?

3. What is the boundary you most need to set right now?

4. How do you respond when a boundary is tested or challenged?

5. Which boundary skill is your weakest?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Balance & Boundary Capacity

Scale: 1 = of

I have clear, healthy boundaries between my work life, personal life, and recovery commitments

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I regularly assess how my time and energy are distributed and make adjustments when needed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I can say no to demands that threaten my recovery, health, or important relationships without excessive guilt

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have a support network I actively use when I feel overwhelmed or out of balance

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I prioritize self-care activities as non-negotiable parts of my schedule, not afterthoughts

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I communicate my needs and limitations honestly with employers, family, and recovery community

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I experience regular moments of genuine rest, joy, and fulfillment in my daily life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I believe that balance is achievable and worth pursuing, even when it feels difficult

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

PART 4 OF 5

Self-Care as Foundation: Not Selfish, Necessary

Self-care in recovery is not self-indulgence. It is infrastructure. It is the foundation upon which everything else is built. When that foundation erodes, everything above it becomes unstable.

The neuroscience is clear: adequate sleep improves emotional regulation and impulse control. Regular exercise produces endorphins and reduces cortisol. Proper nutrition stabilizes blood sugar and supports neurotransmitter production.

The most important shift is moving from reactive to proactive self-care. Proactive self-care is what you do daily to prevent the crash.

Reflection Questions

1. How do you currently think about self-care — as a luxury, a reward, or a necessity?

2. What self-care practices have you been sacrificing?

3. Rate yourself on each self-care dimension — where are you most depleted?

4. Is your self-care primarily reactive or proactive?

5. What is one non-negotiable self-care practice you will commit to this week?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Burnout & Depletion Warning Signs

Scale: 1 = of

I feel physically exhausted even after adequate sleep or rest

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I experience persistent feelings of cynicism, detachment, or emotional numbness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I have noticed a decline in my motivation for recovery, work, or personal activities

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I feel like I am running on empty — constantly giving without being replenished

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. Small frustrations trigger disproportionately strong emotional reactions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I find myself fantasizing about escape — including thoughts about using substances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I feel like I am going through the motions rather than genuinely engaged in my life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. Physical symptoms (headaches, digestive issues, chronic tension) have increased recently

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

PART 5 OF 5

Integration: Making Recovery Your Life, Not a Separate Task

The ultimate goal is integration — a way of living where recovery principles permeate your work, your relationships, and your personal activities so seamlessly that the distinctions begin to dissolve.

Integration does not mean every conversation becomes a recovery conversation. It means that the principles you are learning in recovery — honesty, accountability, emotional awareness, humility, service, making amends, asking for help, letting go of what you cannot control — become the principles you apply everywhere.

Integration is a practice — a daily, imperfect, ongoing effort to live as one whole person rather than three separate personas.

Reflection Questions

1. How compartmentalized is your life right now?

2. Which recovery principle would be most transformative if you applied it more fully at work?

3. What would a fully "integrated day" look like for you?

4. What fears do you have about being more authentically yourself across all life domains?

5. Write a vision statement for your integrated life.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Recovery-Life Conflict

Scale: 1 = of

I feel torn between recovery commitments and work or family responsibilities

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have skipped or reduced recovery activities (meetings, therapy, meditation) because of time pressure

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I worry that being open about my recovery will negatively impact my career or relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I feel overwhelmed by the number of things recovery asks me to do (meetings, step work, therapy, service)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I use recovery activities to avoid personal or professional responsibilities I find stressful

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I struggle to integrate recovery principles into my daily work and personal life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I feel like recovery is a separate "task" rather than an integrated part of how I live

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I have experienced conflict with employers, family, or friends about the time recovery requires

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5