



THE ESSENTIAL **WORK-LIFE BALANCE** CHEAT SHEET

CYNTHIA KYRIAZIS,
PRODUCTIVITY STRATEGIST,
COACH & TRAINER



Focus, Life, Vacation

For the past few months I've been asked a lot about **focus** and **work-life balance**. These two are connected at the hip and rarely do you get one without the other.

Let's begin with focus.

I just read the book *Deep Work* by Cal Newport. It has some great information outlining maybe a bit more information than you bargained for. The one thing I did get out of it was the varied and different approaches (the author calls them philosophies) about how you choose to focus.

Here they are:

- **Monastic Philosophy** – This involves shutting yourself off for very long periods of time in order to do your work. This could mean hours, days, weeks, months...even years. These types of people do, in fact, deep work. Think Henry David Thoreau.
- **Bimodal Philosophy** – When you focus for a minimum of one (full) day a week. The idea is to climb into the work until there is a breakthrough. Think Carl Jung.
- **Rhythmic Philosophy** – When you either designate a period of time to focus (i.e. 10am to 11am daily) or track your progress towards something through visual cues (i.e. putting an 'x' on the calendar for every day that you do whatever it is you want or need to do). This is now called the Chain Method and seems to be attributed to Jerry Seinfeld's approach towards writing jokes. You can potentially build some effective habits using this approach and there are plenty of [apps](#) out there to help. But I suspect a good old calendar and pen will work just fine.
- **Journalistic Philosophy** – It involves your ability to be able to drop whatever you're doing at any given moment and think deeply about something you are required to produce. The author attributes approach to the nature of the deadline-driven nature of journalists, for example.

Now let's talk about work and life.

It doesn't really matter which approach you employ or what you call it. What does matter is that you use something that gets you to peacefully *reflect and work* on your work/life/health/family *priorities* in an uninterrupted, recurring way. Because this type of self-regulation is how anything in the world gets done. It's always one bite at-a-time. With some zen thrown in!

Is it important to achieve? Yes. Is it difficult to achieve. It can be. Does it involve meditative work? It could. Does it involve mindful work? Definitely. But the only thing really required is doing what you *need* to do *first* in order to spend time doing what you *want* to do *later*. And doing this routinely and consistently. Begin with making sure you take vacation this year. Ya never know what might happen!



Paying You to Take Vacation

I heard the on the NBC nightly news one night a couple months ago. I thought maybe I didn't really understand or didn't hear it all, so I went to their website and here's what I found:

Some companies are trying out ways to help their employees unplug.

The automobile firm Daimler allows its employees in Germany to set their email accounts to an "auto-delete" mode while they're on vacation.

The French have [passed a law](#) that requires companies with 50 or more employees to come up with policies preventing office emails from cutting into leisure time.

Olark Live Chat, a San Francisco-based messaging company, offers a \$1,000 bonus for employees who take a five-day vacation.

Yes, you read that right.

Why?

Because there's no way the mind can continue to work at the pace we require without down time and still function with any sense of progress.

Scientists have proven the mind has only so much capacity. And then it gets tired. Like all the organs and muscles in our body. It gets tuckered out.

So even if you're not tired, why not give your brain a rest. Maybe some yoga? Or meditation? Or a weekend off? Or a vacation?

It refreshes your mind and all your senses, reduces your stress, improves your cognitive functioning, and improves the way you manage yourself and your time by becoming re-focused on what's important.

Why would you do anything else?

Work-Life Balance/Blur/Fit

1. **Get to the important stuff first** – by doing it first every day
 - Prioritize your work and honor it
2. **Manage interruptions and distractions** – by setting boundaries
 - On other people *and* yourself
3. **Set time aside for critical thinking** – you need it for growth and innovation
 - Moving things forward requires focus
4. **Set time aside for play** – just as important for adults as kids
 - It helps you create and innovate
5. **Develop grit** – you'll need it over your lifetime
 - Resilience is required to be successful in making a change
6. **Be grateful** – to have a happy life
 - Regular practice replaces a negative self-talk habit
7. **Nurture relationships**
 - Because none of us do this alone

Inspired by an article in Greater Good, *You Will Never Find Work-Life Balance* by Christine Carter, 3/15/16