



# Achieving Work-Life Balance during the Holidays

This time of year is magical, but the holidays often mean more stress and a less balanced work-life routine than usual for busy physicians and their practice managers. Use these tips for managing stress so your holiday spirit stays merry and bright.

## Get Some Back-Up

As a physician or practice manager, you know that your practice will probably get busier this holiday season. Plan ahead for the influx of sick patients and employees on PTO by maintaining relationships with quality relief doctors, technicians, and client care representatives. Coming in on your day off to cover for someone will only send your stress levels into the stratosphere, causing you to resent your job. Keep possible relief staff on speed dial, and don't be afraid to use them.

## Plan Ahead

For many people, the holiday season is a time to spend with friends and family. You'll likely receive many requests for holiday time off, so it will be beneficial for everyone if you plan ahead. Require that team members request holiday vacation days at least 45 days in advance. Then, ensure that your vacation policy has been clearly conveyed to staff multiple times and in various ways, including in the employee handbook, in emails, and during staff meetings. Post the holiday schedule as early as possible so everyone on the team can plan their holiday events.

## Prioritize Your Activities

It may feel as if there aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish everything you need to do for work as well as everything you'd like to do outside of it. To prioritize, make a list of work tasks and personal activities. Begin with must-do work tasks that have deadlines, such as end-of-year planning for your practice, and then move on to important personal priorities. Finally, list optional work and personal activities, putting them in order of importance to you.

## Create a Schedule

Is your list of activities a long one? There are ways to do it all, but, before you create a schedule, determine how you're currently spending your time. How many hours do you spend each week replying to emails and text messages? Running errands? Looking at social media? Chatting with staff members? Track how you spend your time for a few days, and be honest with yourself. You may find that you're spending a lot more time on some activities than you think. Whether you want to cut back your social media use, consolidate errands, shop online instead of in person, or bring your lunch to work rather than eating out every day, find ways to save time and be more efficient during the busy holiday season.

Once you prioritize your work and personal activities and determine how you can be more efficient, create a holiday schedule and stick to it. Use your smartphone's calendar app, a day planner, or a wall calendar, and enter your tasks and activities according to priority. Don't forget to include some downtime for yourself.

## Take Care of Yourself

When your personal life and work get stressful, it can be easy to put your own needs on the back burner. Respect your need for a healthy work-life balance, because if you aren't taking care of yourself, there's no way you'll be able to take care of your patients, your team, or your practice. Set boundaries and stick with them, take breaks at work, exercise, eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, indulge in a massage, or enjoy time with friends. Taking care of *you* should always be high on your list — it's the best gift you can give yourself this holiday season.