Most physicians struggle to find balance between work and home, but it's not as difficult as you might think. Here experts share their top tips.
CUT OUT THE TECH. You don’t have to be home every night, but you do need to have times when you are fully present with the significant people in your life, Rena Seltzer, a personal and professional coach who specializes in working with physicians recently told Physicians Practice. Have a “parking lot” for electronics, and agree to certain times of day when everyone puts away their smartphones and other devices, said Seltzer, who is also the founder of Leader Academic Coaching and Training.
USE YOUR VACATION TIME WISELY.
Take one less vacation day and build in a day for transition and decompression, Jeff Davidson, executive director of The Breathing Space Institute, and a speaker and author on work-life balance issues, recently told Physicians Practice. Avoid returning to work on a Monday, as it’s already a high-pressure day.
CARVE OUT TIME TO ACCOMPLISH CRITICAL TASKS. Set aside blocks of time each day for the things you *need* to do, whether it’s paperwork, patient follow up, or other responsibilities, Lori Brostrom, vice president of marketing at Physician Wellness Services, which assists physicians and practices with managing stress and work and life issues, told *Physicians Practice*. This will help ease stress, because you will know that what you *must* get done, will get done.
START EACH DAY OFF RIGHT. Begin each morning with the intention to experience a good day. Pay attention to the rewarding things in your profession. Allow yourself to notice the difference you make in your patients’ lives, Iris Grimm, founder of The Balanced Physician Program, which helps physicians gain more ease, freedom, and balance in their personal and professional lives, recently told Physicians Practice. At the end of the day you will feel more content and fulfilled.
SET ASIDE TIME FOR BREAKS.
Everyone needs time to refresh and reflect. Setting aside half an hour in your daily schedule two or three times a week for personal time is a good starting point, said Brostrom.
**KNOW YOUR LIMITS.** If you don’t know where you want to spend your time, you won’t know where you don’t want to spend your time, said Grimm. Identify what’s important to you and admit what is not. Don’t be afraid to say no. Remind yourself that when you’re saying no to a request, you are simultaneously saying yes to something you value more than the request.
OUTSOURCE JOBS THAT DON’T REQUIRE YOUR MEDICAL DEGREE.

If you are burnt out, find ways to ease your daily burdens. Hire a housekeeper, a cook a few days a week, or a landscaping service. Keep the jobs that fill your heart, and pay someone to do the rest, said Seltzer.
CONSIDER DELEGATING.

Determine what non-critical or lower-priority tasks you do not need to do. Ask yourself: What is the best use of my time and where can I provide the most value? Then, offload your other tasks to staff members, when possible, said Brostrom.
CLEAN UP YOUR SPACE. Use the end of the day and slow periods to keep your desk orderly, and to better prepare yourself for high-octane output when you’re ready to get started again, said Davidson. Every evening after you’ve cleared your desk, acknowledge what you accomplished that day. Don’t beat yourself up for what you didn’t do. If you can do better, you will, maybe not at once, but soon enough, he said.
RELY ON YOUR COLLEAGUES. When you are with your patients you treat that time as sacred. You don’t allow interruptions unless it is an emergency and you always honor the appointment. Treat your time off the same way, said Grimm. Trust that your patients are in good hands with your on-call colleague. Inform your staff that they can only contact you if it is an absolute emergency. Relax and allow yourself to be fully present during your time away.
MAKE TIME FOR “SELF CARE” OUTSIDE WORK.
Carve out slots of time to do what you love, such as reading, exercising, or baking. To make room for those activities, seriously consider your daily tasks. Are there responsibilities that you can have someone else do? What do you do now that really doesn’t provide value or enjoyment? You might be surprised at how you can re-allocate your time, said Brostrom.
ASK FOR INPUT.
Schedule brainstorming sessions with others (such as your physician partners) to seek new approaches and methods for improving productivity and effectiveness, said Davidson. Also, let others serve as consultants to you and vice versa. Often, others may see what you keep missing, he said.
**ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CAN’T CHANGE.**

Many physicians are frustrated with the current healthcare system, but complaining about things you can’t change will only drain your energy and leave you more frustrated, said Grimm. Instead develop a different perspective on the situation so that it won’t emotionally drain you.
REMEMBER: IT’S OK TO DO SOMETHING JUST BECAUSE YOU ENJOY IT. Sometimes it’s OK to do nothing that appears to have redeeming value. Reading a novel or surfing the Web every once in a while can provide the kind of mental break you may need, said Brostrom.
LET GO OF SOMETHING BEFORE YOU TAKE MORE ON. Before you commit to do a favor, take on a new role, or add a new responsibility, ask yourself what you are willing to give up to make room for the new role, said Grimm. Adding more to your life without eliminating or delegating something else will only lead to more frustration and resentment. Give yourself time to think over your response before you commit too early and then later regret it.
ENGAGE IN HEALTHY ACTIVITIES. Consider the following activities to ease stress and stimulate your mind, said Brostrom:

- Enroll in a yoga, Pilates, or mindfulness mediation class.
- Read fiction, write in a journal, or meditate.
- Purchase exercise equipment for your home, so that it’s easier to use and access regularly.
- Go for a 10-minute walk outside the office to gain energy and clear your mind.
- Sit down to eat breakfast and take a break for lunch.
- Have family dinners whenever possible.
**BE PRESENT.** Don’t miss out on what’s important because you are thinking about something else, said Grimm. When you are at home, don’t focus on the procedure that you did earlier in the day. When you are at work, don’t focus on what’s happening at home. Create a routine that reminds you to stay present in the moment.
CULTIVATE A SUPPORT SYSTEM.

At work, speak openly about stress with colleagues. This can help you gain insight and perspective as well as suggestions for coping, said Brostrom.

At home, sit down with your spouse or partner and have frank discussions and negotiations over household roles and responsibilities. Discussions about parenting, childcare, and elder-care issues, if applicable, can also be very helpful, she said.