

# Balancing Act!

It's been proven in many studies that too much of any one thing isn't good for a person. Whether it's watching TV for hours, sleeping all day, eating your favorite snack foods, or working non-stop, we all need to find the right balance in order to lead a happy and healthy life. Too much work or too much fun can add stress to a person's life. And for people with a mental illness, too much stress can lead to a relapse.<sup>1</sup>

So how can Healthcare Professionals best help others stay on the road to recovery? In workbook 1, session 9 of *Team Solutions*, there are three objectives to review in finding the right balance for your clients. They are:

- Identify the relationship between stress and relapse.
- Define the difference between “relaxing” and “restful” activities.
- Decide whether your life has the right balance of sleep, work, relaxing activities, and restful activities.<sup>1</sup>

After facilitating a discussion around these objectives with your client(s), ask them how they add balance to their lives. This is as simple as asking what they've done to be productive for the day - like work, school or chores. You can also identify balance in their lives by asking them if they've done something nice for someone else and for themselves.

## **A look in the mirror!**

But what about you, the healthcare professional who works day in and day out helping others? What do you do to counter balance the long hours and challenging days? Do you follow your own advice in getting the right amount of activity and the right amount of rest each day?<sup>1</sup> Often times we forget to take care of ourselves while helping others. Just like a flight attendant says before each and every takeoff, “If the oxygen mask above your seat falls, make sure you place it on yourself before assisting those around you.” It's impossible to help others if you don't start with yourself.

First and foremost make sure you take care of yourself! Compartmentalize, de-stress, laugh, eat lunch with a colleague, have flowers on your desk, re-visit your values, look at the mission instead of the storm, subscribe to a daily e-mail joke and share it by posting it outside your office door where others can get a good chuckle or two.

Do what needs to be done to survive a career in a helping profession where you give so much of yourself. Renew yourself. Seek guidance, seek support, and seek to grow professionally. Surround yourself with people and activities that give you mini-breaks from the challenges that you face at work.

But most importantly, develop good boundaries at work and enjoy the wonderful qualities of your clients. You'll see better results in them and yourself!<sup>2</sup>

## **References**

1. Johnson McCrary, K., (2009). Recovering: Achieving Your Life Goals, Session 9 – A Balanced Life. In *Team Solutions, Workbook 1* (page 84).

2. Scheifler, P.L., (2009). Partnering with Your Treatment Team, Session 2 – Recovery and Symptoms. In *Team Solutions, Workbook 2* (page 12).