

--Liesbet Trappenburg  
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Have you ever sat in your living room after work wondering what exactly you did all day? Did you go from meeting to meeting or respond to countless emails, phone calls, and clients' issues only to let the day slip by?

It seems like you are spending more and more of your time and attention in "crisis" mode, putting out the proverbial fires at the office and at home. Rationally, you know that there are still twenty-four hours in a day—no more, no less than two thousand years ago. Yet, the pace of your life today may be overwhelming you.

In my work-life balance surveys with audiences across the United States, people report that the faster their lives race ahead, the **more time** they crave to process it all.

How did you arrive at this predicament, desperately trying to balance your professional life with your personal life? The dominance of technology deserves some of the blame. Email, texts, and cell phones make your life more convenient, but they can also make you accessible 24/7. Much of technology today demands a "now" response. How often do you find yourself responding to requests not just on the same day, but maybe within the hour? And if you don't respond immediately, do you feel guilty? Are you controlling technology or is technology controlling you?

Unless you set clear boundaries about when and how you are available to your clients, colleagues, family, and friends, it becomes increasingly difficult to focus and be productive at work and at home. Your attention becomes scattered and fragmented so that when you are at work, you are thinking about unfinished tasks or problems at home and vice-versa. This habit can spiral out of control and ultimately make you less productive, because you are not 100% mentally present and therefore your results become mediocre.

Another culprit of our speeded-up world is what I call the *finish-your-homework-then-you-can-play* syndrome. You have a To-Do list a mile long. This raises expectations that as a superhero you must cross off everything on that To-Do list before you ever consider doing anything fun for yourself. The challenge, however, is that your "homework" is never done, and the To-Do list just keeps growing! Without taking time out for yourself, you run the risk of quickly burning out.

What does burn out look like? Some symptoms include 1.) You feel apathetic; you just don't care anymore or the passion for your work has faded, 2.) You tire easily, and manipulate your energy level with caffeine or alcohol,

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3.) Your relationships with family, friends, or co-workers are strained, 4.) You eat junk food as meals or skip meals altogether, 5.) You get irritated over small problems, 6.) You want to sleep longer or its opposite, have insomnia.

These symptoms and more can make you feel completely overwhelmed. Resentment starts to build and you lose track of what is truly important.

The irony is that you know intuitively that if you could just slow down, you would ultimately be more productive! Here are 6 tips to start taking back control of your life and reconnecting with your top values and priorities:

1.) **Choose how you will respond.** Everything is a choice in life. Take 5 seconds to decide how you will respond to someone or a situation. *Respond*, don't just react.

2.) **Pay attention to your body's 911 stress calls.** Take 15 seconds at work and notice: Is your breathing shallow? Are your neck and shoulders tight? Are your teeth clenched? Do you need to drink water and hydrate?

3.) **Do something different today.** Get out of your routine by eating something you have never eaten before or take a new way home from work. Wake up and refresh your brain with new experiences.

4.) **Change clothes after work.** This helps to physically and subconsciously separate work from home life.

5.) **Sing in the car.** Relieve stress by singing along to your favorite music. Don't worry about what other people are thinking. They probably just want to know what song it is!

6.) **Do something "useless."** Try doing an activity that you enjoy for its own sake, not because it is necessarily productive. It is important to recharge your mental, emotional, and physical batteries.

Slow down and **take care of yourself first** to prevent burnout and be a better resource to those who depend on you! For more information go to:  
[www.Liesbet.net](http://www.Liesbet.net)

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Join Liesbet for 2 sessions at the VAMA conference, April 25 where she'll present,  
***You Are Not Your Job! Prevent Burnout For Work/Life Balance*** and  
***Your 4-Word Business Plan: Rediscover Your Inspiration & Reinvent Your Business.***