



# How's Your Balance? Navigating Work and Life in the New Normal

**Kate Cihon, FSCP, is the COO at Kilgore Cihon Advisor Group.**

## Why Is Work-Life Balance Important?

Maintaining a proper work-life balance is crucial to your personal wellbeing and professional success, Kate Cihon, FSCP, COO of Kilgore Cihon Advisor Group told attendees of a webinar presented by NAIFA's Young Advisors Team. The COVID-19 outbreak, which has led to many agents and advisors working from home, has increased and in some ways complicated the need for people to understand the meaning of work-life balance and what it looks like.

Even before COVID-19, 66% of full-time employees felt strongly that they did not maintain a proper work-life balance. Advances in immediate communication technologies have impacted work-life balance more than anything, with many employees feeling they need to be connected to work 24/7. Some employers expect employees to respond to communications at any hour, and 57% of workers said technology has ruined the modern-day family dinner, Cihon said.

COVID-19 has only exacerbated issues with work-life balance, as parents working from home find themselves juggling their children's needs with their own professional needs. Shutdowns and quarantines have disrupted workday routines for everyone. Still, U.S. homebound employees who were previously worked from offices report that they are working on average three more hours per day than before shutdowns, Cihon said.

## How Can We Achieve Work-Life Balance During the New Normal?

Cihon said that it is important to work efficiently during work hours. Try to limit distractions and set blocks of time dedicated to necessary tasks. You should do the same for your personal life, she said. Set boundaries, such as setting aside time for family dinners or personal time or workouts.

She asked participants for ideas on navigating work-life balance in quarantine. Suggestions included:

- Creating technology-free times
- Setting up and attending virtual happy hours with friends and family
- Booking times for specific tasks, meals, and exercise
- Dressing for work even if you're working from home and changing to casual clothes for your off time
- Shutting the blinds to reduce distractions during work periods
- Working to create good memories with family members during the shutdown
- Creating shared family experiences

## Create a Work-Life Balance Plan

People who successfully maintain a healthy work-life balance often have a good plan, Cihon said. The plan may include sticking to a set schedule, creating “non-negotiables” in both your professional and personal lives, scheduling time for personal odds and ends, and finding production tools to help you manage your time.

The Eisenhower Decision Matrix, used by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, can help you measure tasks and fit them into a balanced life. The matrix categorizes tasks based on whether they are Urgent and Important (do it now), Important but Not Urgent (schedule a time), Not Important but Urgent (delegate it to someone), or Not Important and Not Urgent (eliminate it).

Also important is to measure your work-life balance success. You should set goals and track how successful you are at meeting them, just as you do for your professional performance. For example, Cihon said, you could set the goal of not working past 5 PM a certain number of days each week, and then log your time to see how you are meeting that goal.

A key to keeping a healthy work-life balance, during the COVID-19 pandemic and at other times, comes down to setting and abiding by priorities.

“Our work is what allows us to live the life we want to live,” Cihon said.