We are all created equal when it comes to time. We have 24 hours each day and 168 hours each week. If we sleep 8 hours a night, we spend 33% of our time sleeping. A regular workweek is 40 hours, which is 24% of our time. That leaves 72 hours—or 43%—for the rest of the week.

These figures show that each veterinary professional can lead a balanced life. If he or she chooses to work 56 hours a week and continues to sleep 8 hours each night, that still leaves 56 hours of personal time. Why, then, do so many of us feel our lives are off-balance?

The problem is not that we need more time but that we need to use our time more wisely. If we take better control of our lives, we can accomplish more in the same 24 hours. Are you willing to champion a work–life balance for yourself and your practice team? Can you simplify your life and get twice as much done in half the time? What are your priorities? What are your team’s priorities? Does everyone look at balance the same way?

Here are 4 ways to be a work–life balance champion:

Living vs Life
Making a living and making a life sometimes point in opposite directions.
—Pico Iyer

Can you help your team make a living and a life? Through actions, training, and coaching, you can be your team’s champion. You do not have to do it all yourself—bring in the many experts in your community to help educate your team.

Do all full-time team members have 2 consecutive days off each week? The easiest way for every team member to have 2 consecutive days off is to close the practice on weekends (see Weekend Policy at the Author’s Practices, next page). Do those days

TIP FOR YOUR TEAM

The easiest way to separate practice life from home life is to change your clothes as soon as you arrive home from work. Suggest to your team members that they do not wear their veterinary scrubs at home because they may continue to think about work subconsciously.
—Sharon DeNayer
work well with their family schedules? Do they all earn adequate vacation time each year? Do they use their vacation days?

**Know Your Priorities**

The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want.

—Ben Stein

How do your team members look at their work? Do they see it as a “job” that is done for money, preferably with a set schedule; a “career,” with chances for advancement and promotion; or a “calling,” which is intrinsically fulfilling? How a person looks at work certainly influences how he or she looks at life balance.

It is important for team members to set team and individual practice goals, and personal goals to champion. Practice leadership should offer goal-setting training and invite each team member to suggest team and individual goals for the practice and goals for his or her personal life. Practice and team goals should be set annually and checked regularly at team meetings. Coaching should be available to help team members meet the goals if needed.

**Use Your Time Wisely**

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.

—Hans Hofmann

Time management is your friend. Without planning and managing your time well, your life will quickly slip out of control. Have time-management gurus train your team. You probably think you do not have the time; however, without training, you and your team will waste even more time struggling to achieve your goals, which you will never quite reach. Seek help with simplifying your life, getting more done, and achieving the balance you want.

**Set Boundaries**

Problems arise in that one has to find a balance between what people need from you and what you need for yourself.

—Jessye Norman

We must all decide what “balance” means in our lives and work toward achieving that balance.

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**Editor’s note:** Sharon DeNayer, co-owner and practice manager of Windsor Veterinary Clinic and the Downing Center for Animal Pain Management, has 29 years of experience in veterinary medicine. Her special interests include hospice and palliative care, bereavement, and team and client education.

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**Weekend Policy at the Author’s Practices**

Our team members work hard all week long, but they know their weekends can be completely devoted to personal activities. The decision not to have weekend hours was made when our first practice was started more than 23 years ago. It was the only practice in town and there were no area emergency practices. The team was on call for emergencies, but clients paid extra fees for after-hours care. Now there are 6 other practices in town and all keep some weekend hours. Our practices—we now have 2—remain closed on the weekends and, because of the opening of an emergency practice, the teams no longer treat after-hours emergencies. No clients were lost, and the team is fresh to begin each new week.

—Sharon DeNayer

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**READ ALL ABOUT IT**

- **Twice as Much in Half the Time.** Jones A.—Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, 2009.