OCTOBER, 2026 WELLNESS SERIES · PART 3 OF 3

Balance at Work and at Home

Coaching Your Way to Well-Being During National Work and Family Month

By Kathy L. Fortner, EdS, LPC, CCMHC, BCC | Monday, October 19, 2026

October is **National Work and Family Month,** established by the U.S. Senate in 2003 to encourage healthier, more flexible work environments. This week, October 19 to 23, is also **Global Leaders in Wellbeing Week,** which focuses on the role leaders play in shaping the well-being of the people they manage.

Both observances point to a truth many of us feel every day: **our work life and our personal life are not separate.** Stress from work follows us home, and stress from home follows us to work. Learning to manage both is one of the most important things we can do for our mental health.

What Work-Life Balance Really Means

Balance doesn't mean an equal split of hours between work and home. For most people, that isn't realistic. Instead, balance means:

- *Your time and energy reflect what matters most to you*
- *You have enough rest to recover from demands*
- *You can be present where you are, most of the time*
- *You feel you have some choice and control over your days*

Balance also shifts with life's seasons: a new baby, caring for an aging parent, a promotion, a health challenge, an empty nest. What worked last year may need adjusting now.

Signs Your Balance Needs Attention

- *You feel exhausted most days, even after rest*
- *You're irritable with people you love*
- *You rarely have time for things that restore you*
- *You check work messages constantly, even during personal time*
- *Your health, sleep, or relationships are slipping*
- *You feel cynical or detached from work you once cared about*

These can be early signs of burnout, and they're worth taking seriously.

Coaching Strategies for Better Balance

As a life and executive coach, I often begin with the same simple steps. You can try them on your own:

1. Take an honest inventory. Rate your satisfaction in key life areas, such as work, family, relationships, health, rest, and growth, on a scale of 1 to 10. Notice where the biggest gaps are.

2. Clarify your priorities. Ask, *"What matters most to me in this season of life?"* When everything feels urgent, priorities help you decide.

3. Set one clear boundary. Examples: no work email after 7 p.m., a protected family dinner three nights a week, or a true lunch break away from your desk. Communicate it clearly and kindly.

4. Start with small experiments. Choose one small change at work, one at home, and one for yourself. Try them for a week, then review what worked.

5. Protect recovery time. Rest isn't a reward for finishing everything. It's what makes sustained effort possible.

6. Ask for what you need. Many workplaces offer flexible schedules, Employee Assistance Programs, or accommodations. You won't know unless you ask.

Our free **Work-Life Balance Coaching Worksheet** walks you through each of these steps.

For Leaders: Your Influence Matters

During Global Leaders in Wellbeing Week, it's worth remembering that managers often shape an employee's daily stress as much as anyone in their life. A few habits make a meaningful difference:

- ***Check in regularly,*** *and ask "How are you doing, really?"*
- ***Talk about workload openly,*** *and help prioritize when everything can't get done.*
- ***Model healthy habits:*** *take breaks, use your time off, and avoid sending late-night messages.*
- ***Recognize effort and progress,*** *not just results.*
- ***Know the resources,*** *like your EAP, flexible options, and accommodations, and share them freely.*
- ***Respond with care*** *if someone is struggling: listen, avoid judgment, and follow up.*

Our free **Leading With Well-Being** handout offers check-in questions and a simple "do and avoid" guide for supportive conversations.

Counseling, Coaching, or Both?

National Coaches Day on October 6 is a reminder of how valuable a good coach can be. Here's a simple way to think about the difference:

- **Counseling** helps you understand and heal emotional struggles like stress, anxiety, depression, grief, or relationship challenges.
- **Life coaching** helps you clarify goals, build habits, and move forward with confidence.
- **Executive coaching** helps leaders strengthen communication, decision-making, and team well-being.

Many people benefit from both at different times. If you're feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or ready for growth, reaching out for support is a sign of strength.

Your Takeaway This Week

Complete the **Work-Life Balance Coaching Worksheet**, choose one boundary to try for the next seven days, and share it with someone who can support you. If you lead a team, schedule one caring check-in this week.

Thank you for reading the October Wellness Series. Find all three articles, the October Wellness Calendar, and free handouts on the KLF-Insights website.

About the Author

Kathy L. Fortner, EdS, LPC, CCMHC, BCC, is a Board Certified Licensed Professional Counselor with more than 25 years of experience and the founder of KLF-Insights. She offers online counseling, life coaching, executive coaching, and consulting for individuals, couples, and organizations, with a focus on prevention and wellness.

Need support this season? **Kathy L. Fortner, EdS** offers online counseling and coaching sessions. Schedule a session at [insert contact link]. Many employers also offer free, confidential counseling through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP); check with your HR department.

In crisis? If you are thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or call 911.

This article is for educational and wellness purposes and is not a substitute for individual counseling, diagnosis, or treatment.