

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Career Choices and Challenges

While your friends were out partying every weekend, you were busy burning the midnight oil trying to finish that last-minute work project. Or maybe you dread attending family events because, while you're a rising star at work, your aunts are only interested on why you're not married (or dating for that matter). Perhaps your school chums have just returned from five years of traveling the globe with tales of their "life-altering" experiences—all while you quietly mumble something about the growth of your retirement investments.

If any of these scenarios sound familiar, you're certainly not alone. Many people choose to roll up their sleeves and intensely focus on their career. And while work ambition is generally perceived positively, sometimes the success track can feel a little solitary and may leave you wondering if you've "missed the boat"—be it marriage, kids, travel or another event—on other important life experiences. Avoid "the grass is always greener" syndrome of success by:

Acknowledging your achievements. While you don't need to brag about your promotion or that great client you brought in, you should celebrate and take pride in your successes. While it's great to have goals, it's also important to appreciate the here and now. Otherwise you might find yourself forever pursuing a "perfect state" of being that doesn't exist.

Taking a long, hard look. You might have been so busy over the years chasing that career target that you never stopped to evaluate the big picture. If that great goal you finally reached is feeling a little hollow, it might be time to take stock. Schedule some time to sit down and reassess. What in your life is working? What would you like more time to do? What's not quite there in terms of balance? If need be, enlist the support of a mentor, career counselor, life coach or other professional who can help you pinpoint gaps and assist you in creating a plan that gets you where you want to go personally and professionally.

Staying connected or reconnecting. If your pursuit of that pie in the sky dollar figure or higher position has come at the cost of time with friends and family, it's time to restore some balance. Set a date to meet up with friends or work at being at family events—even if it's just mealtime—on a more regular basis. Most importantly, stick to your commitments. Give personal appointments the same respect you would a work meeting.

Switching off phones and screens and tuning in to people. If you've earned a reputation for doing business deals over the phone at dinner, or texting at the kitchen table, it's time to disconnect as much as possible from electronic devices and reconnect with those who matter most to you.

Realizing it's never too late. With a few exceptions, it's never too late to realize your personal dreams —even if on a smaller scale. Still looking for love? From online dating to singles activity groups, there are a multitude of options out there to find a mate whatever your age or life stage. Always dreamed of becoming a world famous photographer? Though you might not be globally recognized, you can still share your art with the world through online photo sites or more locally through a community exhibition. Even if you feel regrets about missing your chance to have kids, you can still be the "cool" aunt or uncle to nieces, nephews or your friends' kids. Or why not volunteer as a big brother or sister to children in need of a great role model?

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For many people, their job title becomes who they are. It defines them and becomes their reason for living. The challenge with this way of thinking is that if you retire or one day lose your job, you might be left feeling “lost” or worse still, like a piece of you is gone.

Instead, why not treat your job as a job? Sure, work is a major component of your life and hopefully is more than just a source of income. But when you look back on all you’ve accomplished it probably won’t be the great money you made or that incredible presentation you did that you think of. More likely your memories will lead you to time spent with loved ones and the great experiences you shared with them along the way.