



Give up work-life juggle

WITH more Australians struggling to achieve the ideal of having a work-life balance, is it time to embrace the imbalance in our lives?

Studies show the constant juggle between time spent at work compared with caring for family, enjoying leisure activities and downtime is worsening.

Experts say most people are pessimistic about achieving a work-life balance, with many fearing it's just too hard in today's economy.

So has the time come to give up the battle?

Business consultant Judy Reynolds says having "intentional imbalance" is a better option than feeling stressed about failing to achieve a happy equilibrium between life and work.

The idea is based on accepting that work is part of life and that at certain times one will dominate the other.

Ms Reynolds says this approach might mean things feel out of whack for a while,

but that's OK as long as you are working towards a goal.

"It might be that you're building your career or a business and you're going to have to invest more time in

this space than you would, say, in your family," she says.

"That's perfect because it's intentional.

"The stress then comes

out of it all, the sense of failure comes out, because how could you be failing when you're on purpose?"

A 2014 study by the

Australia Institute found the balance between work and life had worsened for nearly five million workers in the past five years.

The main culprits were longer working hours and job insecurity. Ms Reynolds said the key to switching from having a work-life balance ideal to "intentional imbalance" is working out a life plan that includes your goals for work, family, friends, health and

recreation.

The plan acts as a reference point for making decisions, such as whether you need to ask your boss for more flexible hours so you can spend more time caring for an elderly relative.

Alternatively, if your goal is to take a year off from running your business to go travelling, you'll need to spend time beforehand putting in place a team and processes to keep things running smoothly, said Ms Reynolds, who heads the Sydney-based Opening Gates consultancy.



IF YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM: Instead of stressing about balancing work and life, experts say a better option is to embrace the imbalance, with a goal in mind.

Picture: NAOMI JELICOE