



Forget balance for less stress

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 to caring for family, enjoying leisure activities and downtime is worsening.

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

So has the time come to give up the battle?

Business consultant Judy Reynolds said having "intentional imbalance" is a better option to 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 at certain times one will dominate the other.

Ms Reynolds said 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 said.

"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 doing it 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, like whether you need to ask your boss for more flexible hours so you can spend time caring for an elderly relative.

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 while you're away.



KEYS TO INTRODUCING INTENTIONAL IMBALANCE



- Write a life plan outlining your goals
- Share it with those close to you, so if you need to work longer hours for a certain time they are prepared
- Set time frames for how long certain imbalances will last
- Use the plan to make decisions about achieving your goals
- Ditch the guilt about never achieving work-life balance