



Focus on goals makes embracing imbalance bearable

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

Business consultant Judy Reynolds says 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 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" was working out a life plan that included your goals for work, family, friends, health and recreation.

The plan acts as a reference point for making deci-

sions, like 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 processes to keep things running smoothly while you're away.