

Supporting work-life balance

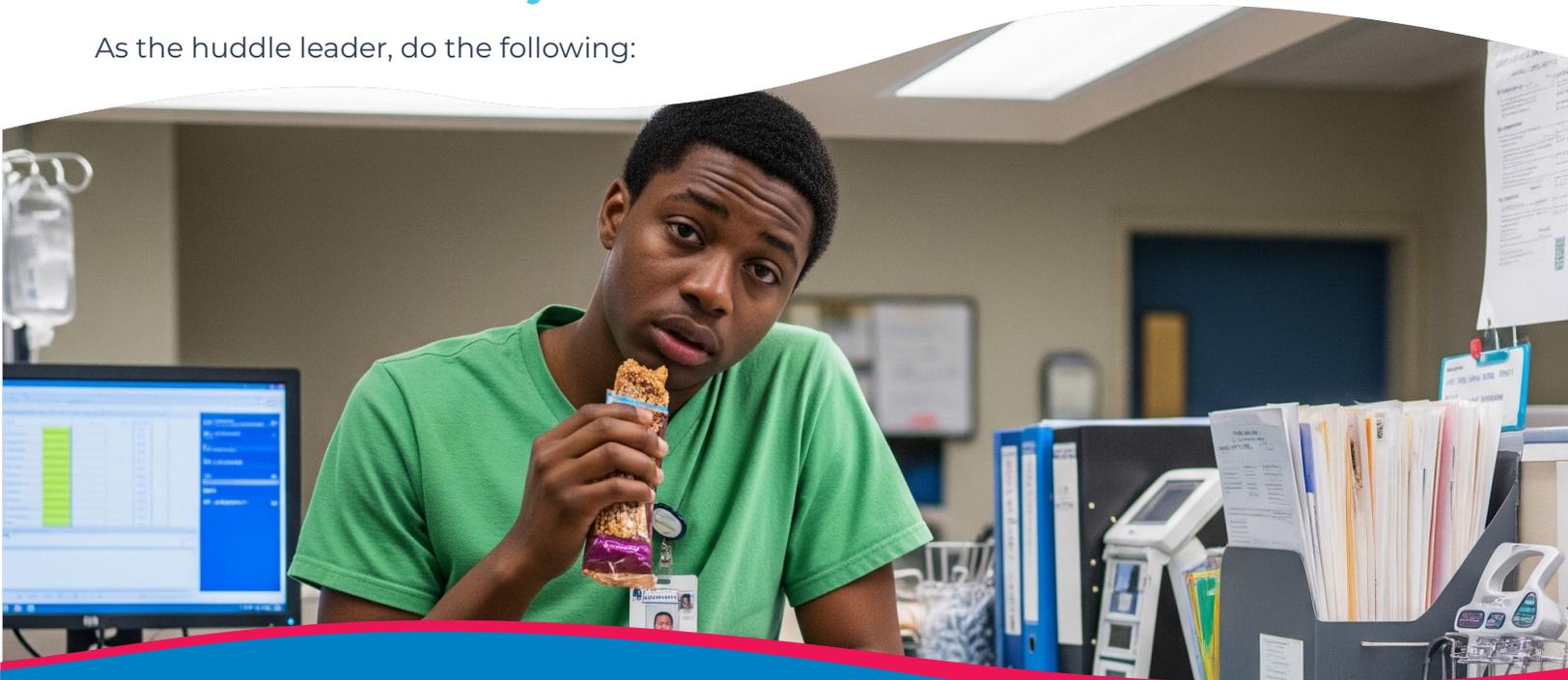
After this huddle, staff should be able to:

- **Define** work-life balance and its significance for individual health and resident / client care.
- **Identify** workplace factors that can disrupt balance, such as heavy workloads or lack of breaks.
- **Apply** practical strategies to support team members in achieving work-life harmony during busy shifts.

How to run the safety huddle

As the huddle leader, do the following:

- Before the huddle, review the huddle content and huddle leader notes.
- Have resources ready, such as policies, employee assistance programs, or SafeCare BC resources.
- Choose a scenario that fits your workplace and read it aloud.
- Use the guiding questions to lead the discussion.
- Use huddle leader notes as support while leading the discussion.
- Keep the discussion short to about 5-10 minutes.



Definitions

Work-life balance means managing the demands of your job alongside your personal and family life. Balance supports your well-being by reducing stress and preventing work issues from affecting your home life. Balance can also improve your job satisfaction, prevent burnout and contribute to your overall health. It is about recognizing that we have many essential roles, such as being employees, parents, caregivers to family (including aging parents), and partners.

Scenario for long-term care

Kwame, a care aide, is working an evening shift at his care home. The unit is unusually busy because two colleagues called in sick, leaving the team short-staffed. Kwame is constantly rushing between rooms, answering call bells, and assisting with dinner. He planned to take his dinner break at 6:00 p.m. but it is now 7:30 p.m., and he still has several residents to help prepare for bed. Exhausted, Kwame decides to skip his break entirely. He eats a granola bar at the nursing station while finishing his charting. He notices he is becoming more impatient with residents, and his back is starting to ache. He tells himself he will eat properly at home, but he feels completely drained.

Guiding questions for long-term care

- What signs suggest that Kwame's work-life balance is being disrupted during this shift?
- What could Kwame or his teammates do in the moment to ensure he gets at least a short break?
- How does skipping breaks affect the quality of care provided to residents?

Facilitation tip: Listen for staff who feel that skipping breaks is “just part of the job.” Gently redirect them to think about how being overtired can lead to errors or injuries. Remind the team that balance isn't only about work and home but also about balancing their well-being against the demands of work. Encourage them to brainstorm how they can “tag-team” to cover each other's breaks.

Scenario for home care

Lena is a home health care worker with seven client visits scheduled across the city. Her first client, Mrs. Chen, had a fall during the night and needed extra reassurance, which put Lena 20 minutes behind schedule. This delay creates a domino effect. Lena skips her coffee break and gobbles her lunch in her car while stuck in traffic. By her fifth client, she realizes she is making small errors, like forgetting to initial a medication chart. She feels her heart racing and her patience wearing thin as she hurries to her last client's home. Lena knows her care isn't up to her usual standards because she is too focused on the clock.



Guiding questions for home care

- How does the stress of trying to “catch up” affect Lena's well-being and her connection with her clients?
- What resources or communication tools could Lena use when she realizes her schedule is becoming unmanageable?

- What can supervisors do in the moment when a worker is running behind? What can be changed in the schedule or expectations so that Lena doesn't feel forced to rush?

Facilitation tip: If the conversation turns into a complaint about scheduling, ask: "What is one specific thing we could do today to improve how we communicate when someone is running behind?"

Huddle leader notes

1. Create a safe space:
 - **Listen**, respect all views, and be mindful of others' challenges.
 - **Guide** the discussion to focus on what participants can control.
 - **Move** the conversation from complaints to solutions, strengths, and helpful actions.
 - **Invite** anyone with specific concerns to talk with you after the huddle.
2. Key discussion points: Use the objectives and key discussion points below to guide the huddle if needed.
 - **Encourage breaks:** Remind staff that taking entitled breaks is essential for health and a core part of creating balance. It is crucial for job satisfaction, preventing burnout, and supporting better care of residents or clients.
 - **Work-life balance:** Support staff in talking to supervisors when they struggle to balance their roles at work and home.
 - **Organizational support:** A healthy organization fosters a workplace where workers still have energy left for their personal lives after their shift ends.

Additional resources

SafeCare BC | *Power in the pause: How microbreaks help you find balance* (article)

A short pause holds powerful potential, especially when it helps you become more present, focused, and productive.

SafeCare BC | *Leading with boundaries: Why respect and balance matter* (article) Feeling worn out is a common refrain in the care sector, where long hours and emotional stress are chronic. But what if the solution isn't just about more resources, but clearer boundaries?

SafeCare BC | *Empowering your inner calm through balance and resilience* (webinar): Discover how to activate your parasympathetic nervous system to build inner resilience, helping you stay calm and centred amidst high-stress work and life demands.

SafeCare BC | *Work-life balance and self-care* (safety huddle): Achieve a work-life balance by developing and implement your own self-care plan.

WorkSafe Saskatchewan | *What is balance at work?*

Have That Talk | *Learn about the national standard - Balance* (video)

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health | *Putting balance on the agenda*

