

## **Finding right balance improves mental equilibrium; Psychologists put together online workbook dealing specifically with work-related depression**

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Five years ago, Rebecca Budd woke up at 2 a.m. thinking, "I don't think I can do all of this."

Budd, now 52, worked at least 40 hours a week in the banking industry, spent 25 hours a week researching for her MBA, volunteered 15 hours a week, lent extra support to her husband who was ill, raised her pre-teen son and commuted to Vancouver from Langley.

Once she'd decided she needed to change, she identified the priorities in her life, acknowledged that little decisions were leading to major overcommitment problems and created a plan to tackle them.

She held a meeting at work and told everyone that she was going to go home at 5 p.m. from that time on.

"I had people coming and hugging me who said, 'Thank you. We were so worried about you,'" she said, adding that after she achieved better balance in her life, her work performance has only improved.

Budd learned how to say no, even though she sometimes felt like she was letting people down. Her family moved from a large home in Langley to a condo in False Creek to cut out the stressful commute. She now enjoys more reading time.

When Budd heard about the release of a free new online workbook called Antidepressant Skills at Work, she attended its June business launch out of professional and personal interest.

The Provincial Health Services Authority, which works with the five geographic health authorities in the province, is distributing the workbook online for free.

Budd wished she'd had the benefits of its practical three-step approach 10 years ago.

The workbook aims to help readers identify their workplace problems, acknowledge and change distorted thinking that makes work and life situations worse, and sets specific goals to improve their lives.

It includes stories about a workaholic who feels tired all the time, a worker who has a problem with anger, an employee who's company doesn't share his views, and an employee who believes he should be in a higher position. Budd said the book provides one or two scenarios most people can relate to.

The section on realistic thinking highlights common negative thoughts people have at work--for example when their boss cancels their meeting about an important project. It teaches someone who might think, "He must be hearing bad things about my work. He probably thinks I'm incompetent," to challenge such thoughts with more realistic thinking, like "I don't know why he cancelled. Maybe something urgent came up."

Budd said the workbook forces people to have powerful conversations with themselves and it fosters a sense of hope, even if the individual can't complete all the exercises.

Dr. Joti Samra, one of the three local clinical psychologists who authored the workbook, said it was created because no other self-care books dealt with depression in the workplace.

"Many of us spend more time with our co-workers than we do with our families, so it's such a big part of our lives, but yet it really has been missed in the existing literature that's out there," Samra said. "We know there's something unique about work and the demands it places on us."

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