

# The balanced researcher

Strategies for busy researchers



Hugh Kearns   Maria Gardiner

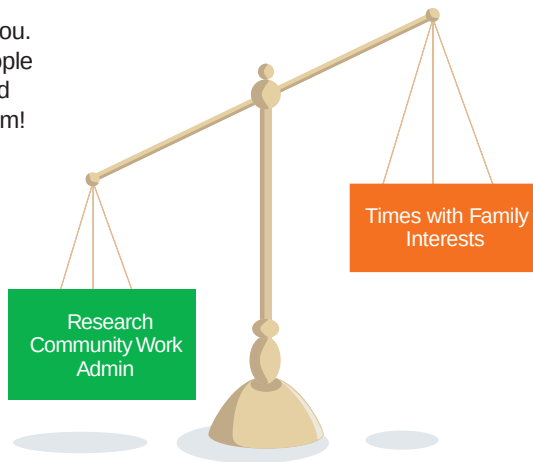




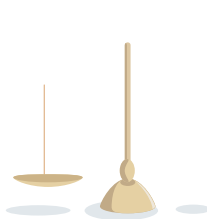
# How's your balance?

OK, so that story might not be you. Then again, we have lots of people come up to us at workshops and ask if we've been spying on them! So how is your balance?

The balance scale on the right is a visual way of looking at balance.



- > Try out a few balance scales for yourself. Where would you place the following items on your balance scale?



## What would those who know you say?

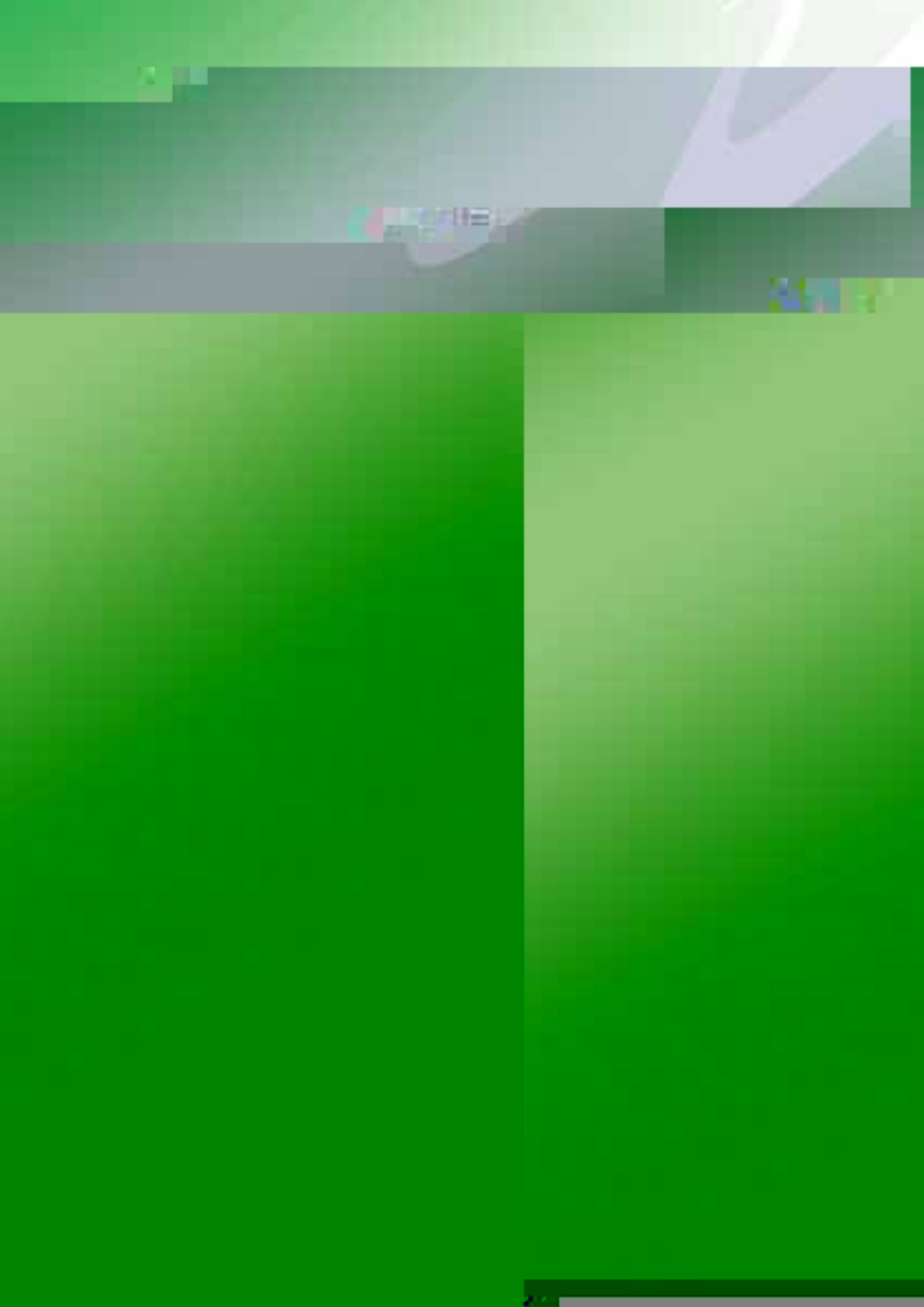
We worked with one woman who was on an international post-doc. She worked hard in the lab all day. When she went home she looked after her family. Because English was her second language she attended a class to help with her written English. She was exhausted. When we asked what she would like to do she said she'd love to be able to spend an hour a week doing yoga but couldn't

# Ten strategies for keeping your work in balance

## 1 Make a plan



A senior researcher told us how busy she was. She had moved from one institution to another







the 'information' and 'communication' fields. The 'information' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'communication' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of communication production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

The 'information science' field is defined as:

...the study of the processes of information production, distribution, access, use and evaluation, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which these processes take place. (p. 10)

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The 'information technology' field is defined as:

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The 'information systems' field is defined as:

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The 'information management' field is defined as:

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# Ten strategies for keeping the non-work part of your life in balance

Establish boundaries  
between work and non-work

## Ask your significant others before taking on major commitments

Often we take on major commitments, that impact on our family and friends, without really thinking about what it means for them. So when someone suggests that you apply for a new grant that will take a lot of your time you might mention it to the people close to you. They might comment •But you said you were overworked already. How are you going to fit this in?Ž One researcher we know took this to such extremes that people used to ring his partner first to ask if he was available for new commitments.

# Ten strategies for keeping the non-work part of your life in balance

## Book breaks and holidays

Often we tell ourselves we must have a break when we find the time. But then the time doesn't come. An alternative is to schedule breaks and holidays well in advance. The break itself is good but looking forward to it can also be motivating. Even short breaks are helpful. They can help you get perspective on issues and often you return to work feeling more productive.

## Exercise, diet and health

When things are out of balance it's likely that the last thing you want to do is exercise or examine your health and diet. Yet these things build up your resilience and give you more energy. It's tempting, when you're under pressure from looming deadlines, to work late into the night and sleep less.

This might work in the short term but it becomes counter-productive. You can end up putting in more hours but getting less output.

Once again, looking after yourself works better if you have a routine.

What small changes could you make on a consistent basis?

## Me time

## Review your priorities

Sometimes it's easy to drift into things or get carried along by peers and colleagues. Because everyone else has the latest labour-saving gadget you get one. And then you have to work harder to pay for it. And it doesn't seem to save you much labour!

What do you really enjoy doing? Did you have a passion when you were a child, for example, singing, painting? Do you have some great interest or hobby? Our interests often get squeezed out when work pressure and other demands increase. Which is a shame for two reasons. Firstly, you are missing out on something you enjoy. And secondly these activities restore you and are likely to make you more motivated and productive.

What would you do if you had some •me timeŽ?

Why don't we do it? One reason is that some of these are hard to do in the middle of something, or when we're busy, our thinking is not clear enough to increase the chance of success.

## Change

It's like writing it in a notebook, but it or arranging to do it. For example, tell your kids to do it after school and before bed. Or join a knitting group.

It's as difficult, eg saying no to a piece of work, or taking a break from your head, then give yourself a reward (eg a cup of tea) and might be having a cup of tea when checking your emails! The reward must come AFTER the work.

It's made.

It's ch!  
It's weekend break  
It's partner  
It's bring work!)

It's it right now  
It's al out?

# Putting it into practice

This short book is an opportunity to think about the current balance in your work and your life and how you might like things to be. It provides a range of practical strategies and suggestions that many researchers have used to make small but significant changes.

## Balance at work

- ① Make a plan
- ② Pick the right things
- ③ Make time for research
- ④ Learn how to say NO
- ⑤ Delegate
- ⑥ Set realistic standards
- ⑦ Write regularly (and then submit it!)
- ⑧ Don't check your email first thing in the morning
- ⑨ Use the 3 Ds of paperwork (and email)
- ⑩ Deal with distractions

## Balance in your non-work life

- ① Establish boundaries between work and non-work
- ② Get a routine
- Ask your significant others
- Be present
- Book breaks and holidays
- Delegate, outsource, get help
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## About the authors

Hugh Kearns is the Head of the Professional Development Unit at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.

Maria Gardiner is a clinical psychologist and also co-ordinates a very successful