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<http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/Careers/11/04/quality.life/index.html>

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8 ways to improve quality of life at work

Learn to separate who you are from your job

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If you are looking at your job as a source of satisfaction at work, then you may be looking in the wrong place. Job satisfaction is not as much about the job itself as it is about how you hold the circumstances of your job in your mind. Quality of life in the workplace comes when you separate who you are from "the job" -- when you can look at what you do as a source of energy, fulfillment and learning.

Burt Woolf, founder and CEO of the Center for Quality of Life, helps people from every business sector generate fulfillment in their personal lives while producing satisfying job results that make a tangible difference in the world around them.

Here are eight principles that Woolf suggests people follow to help create what he calls a "quality-of-life context" in the workplace:

1. Create a flexible personal vision: You can create a personal vision by articulating what you want to accomplish in your career and identifying the specific difference(s) you hope to make as a professional. Such a vision sets the target for where you want your life and career to be headed. Just as importantly, you need to be prepared to make adjustments to your vision at any given moment. "I was at the height of a national career when my first wife was diagnosed with cancer," Woolf said. "At that moment, my vision shifted completely. It was no longer important to me to be a nationally known personality in my field." Life's journey is all about twists and turns. Be flexible and ready when it doesn't go as planned.

2. Don't confuse your real identity with the roles you play at work: Everybody plays roles at work. There are boss roles (e.g. having to be right all the time) and worker roles (e.g. having to be a team player, a good listener). These roles have been designed for the game of work -- they do not define your true identity. For job satisfaction, let your vision -- not your roles at work -- manifest who you really are.

3. Develop healthy personal habits: Take care of your body, mind and spirit. When you maintain a healthy lifestyle, (as simple as eating right, exercising and getting enough sleep), you will be resilient enough to withstand all those challenges and pressures you face at work.

4. Be a compassionate worker: Your peers, subordinates and supervisors all have personal stories that shape their behaviors -- including how they act toward you. If you can put yourself in their shoes, they'll respond more positively to you, and in turn, your own behavior will be recognized positively by others.

5. Turn relationships into partnerships: Your interactions with others should generate results for mutual benefit. If you have a clear personal vision (Principle No. 1) and you are compassionate (Principle No. 4), then you will be able to more easily figure out how to make the people at work (boss, colleagues and those who work under you) allies to help achieve your own needs. People who help each other in this way tend to experience greater satisfaction and reward.

6. Be responsive to situations, not reactive: Research has shown that many of our behaviors are often reactions to circumstances formed during early childhood. For example, people often treat their supervisors like parents and behave like children in their presence! Once you become aware and let go of the underlying forces driving your behavior, you can choose to be a responsive adult, performing better in the eyes of others and acting more consistently with your own needs.

7. Be a good citizen and create a healthy community around you: People who follow these principles tend to attract others who also want job satisfaction. Together, they can often create a community of like-minded folks who strive to get the job done while serving everybody's needs -- just like a high-performance, deadline-driven team. For job satisfaction, be a good citizen within your company, recognize others for their achievements and work in collaboration with others to effect responsible change.

8. Listen to and learn from the lessons of life: New science teaches us that everything is interconnected with everything else; in the universe, there is no right/wrong or good/bad. Your life is that way too -- it moves inevitably forward and there will be bumps along the way. Job satisfaction is all about taking those day-to-day challenges, pressures and upsetting situations and turning them into life lessons that allow you to grow and move on as a better, more fulfilled person and professional.

Burt Woolf is founder and CEO of the Center for Quality of Life based in Amherst, Massachusetts. For more than 30 years, Woolf has been coaching and advising employers, employees and community leaders to achieve their full personal and professional potential. His articles have appeared in national publications, and he regularly delivers presentations and leads training programs, workshops and retreats on quality of life topics. For a bibliography on this subject and to learn more about the Center for Quality of Life, visit www.qiconsult.com/careerbuilder.

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