

Article Date	Headline / Summary	Publication	Edition	Page No.
5 Mar 2024	BUSINESS HONCHOS' WELLNESS MANTRA: ME TIME, MUSIC, WALKS	Business Standard	All Editions	1, 18

Biz honchos' wellness mantra: Me time, music, walks, smiles

From work-life balance to work-life integration, corporate leaders share how they stay healthy in every way

BS REPORTERS

Mumbai/Kolkata/New Delhi/Bengaluru/Chennai, 4 March

In the last few years, the debate on work-life balance has swung between how much is healthy and how much is necessary. Should a work-week be 70-hour-long or is a four-day office routine more productive? Should we give work our all or seek work-life balance?

While there is no one right answer to these questions, the general consensus is that work and wellness have to go hand in hand. Incidents such as Zerodha Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nithin Kamath suffering a stroke only reiterate this reality. India Inc leaders say that while stress is inevitable given the nature of their jobs, they all have their ways of ensuring their wellness.

"For me, it is [through] family, music, books and physical activity," says T V Narendran, managing director and CEO, Tata Steel.

When not on a plane, Narendran goes for at least an hour-long run or walk in the morning. During weekends or if he is travelling, he turns to books. Music, he says, normally plays all the time at home or when he is running or walking; the preference is for rock, jazz and Blues. He also plays drums, which he gets time for if he is in Jamshedpur over the weekend.

Jayant Acharya, joint managing director and CEO, JSW Steel, also turns to music to unwind, besides yoga, walks and theatre. "I generally alternate between yoga and walks in the morning," he says. "Usually, people take a break from physical activity on Sunday; I don't." Whenever there is an opportunity, he tries to catch a play or go to a music concert. Apart from this, he attempts to keep his weekend free — at least two-thirds of it.

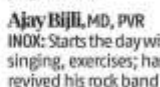
Ajay Bijli, managing director, PVR INOX, credits his focus on wellness "to how we were brought up in school (Modern School, New Delhi)." Each day, he says, was dedicated to a hobby like art, music or pottery. "As a result, that one-dimensional view of life, of only working and doing nothing else,



THEIR STRESS-BUSTERS



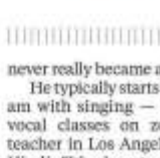
T V Narendran, MD & CEO, Tata Steel: Family, music, books, physical activity; also plays drums



Ajay Bijli, MD, PVR INOX: Starts the day with singing, exercises; has revived his rock band



Jayant Acharya, JMD and CEO, JSW Steel: Yoga, morning walks, going to plays, music concerts, keeping weekends free



Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance: Tries to smile a lot, practises yoga & meditation, reads spiritual philosophies, doesn't carry work forward



Vignesh Shahane, MD and CEO, Ageas Federal Life Insurance: Believes in work-life integration rather than work-life balance; is careful about what he eats, drinks



Dilip Jose, MD and CEO, Manipal Hospitals: Early start and finish to office, evening walks, answering all mails the same day

Jayant Acharya, JMD and CEO, JSW Steel: Yoga, morning walks, going to plays, music concerts, keeping weekends free

Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance: Tries to smile a lot, practises yoga & meditation, reads spiritual philosophies, doesn't carry work forward

Vignesh Shahane, MD and CEO, Ageas Federal Life Insurance: Believes in work-life integration rather than work-life balance; is careful about what he eats, drinks

Dilip Jose, MD and CEO, Manipal Hospitals: Early start and finish to office, evening walks, answering all mails the same day

Early start and finish to office, evening walks, answering all mails the same day

Mayank Kumar, co-founder & MD, upGrad: Morning run, time with family

Arun Alagappan, executive vice-chairman, Coromandel International: Spending time with nature, horses



Mayank Kumar, co-founder & MD, upGrad: Morning run, time with family



Arun Alagappan, executive vice-chairman, Coromandel International: Spending time with nature, horses

and yoga. During the Covid pandemic, he found music and fitness to be "great channels to build my resilience — physical, mental, and emotional". He has since revived his 1980s-style rock band.

Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, meanwhile, swears by the power of a smile. "I try to smile a lot, even when I don't have a reason to; this changes your mood and uplifts that of people around you," he says. He also practises yoga and meditation, and "I keep reading and exploring different spiritual philosophies". Also crucial is family time.

"I have observed that stress stems from the anxiety of not knowing what to do and having many pending tasks," he says. To counter this, he finishes the tasks of the day and does not carry them forward. "I also ensure I am well-prepared for the day, which means spending extra time reading various reports and briefs."

Despite these efforts, he admits, stress has a knack of creeping up on you. "To manage such situations, I close my eyes and take a few deep breaths. This helps reduce my stress level exponentially," he says. Time permitting, he goes on walks to spend time with himself.

Vignesh Shahane, MD and CEO, Ageas Federal Life Insurance, says that as a CEO, he is less stressed. "I have 10-12 earnest and hardworking reportees who do the heavy lifting for me," he says. "In my last role, when I was reporting to the CEO, my life was more stressful because of so much travel and all kinds of pressures."

Shahane does not believe there is any such thing as work-life balance; "it is only work-life integration". He explains: "I do some personal work during office hours and also bring work home. I don't believe in demarcating and putting them in separate buckets."

There are certain aspects he does not compromise on. "I am very careful about what I eat, how much I drink. I've stopped smoking altogether," he says. Having played for

Bombay (Mumbai) in the Ranji Trophy, he says he was always conscious about exercise. However, "after a certain age, you cannot keep running marathons and working five hours in the gym." It is about a sense of well-being, which can be achieved by running, going to the gym or for a morning walk or something like yoga, he says. Experience also teaches how to find one's equilibrium.

"Over the years, I have figured out a pattern that works fairly well," says Dilip Jose, MD and CEO, Manipal Hospitals. "That includes an early start to office and an early finish, too." An hour of walking in the evening serves both as exercise and destresser, he says, after which he catches up on mail.

"Ensuring that all mails are responded to by the end of the day also helps in adhering to a regular schedule as you are not dealing with backlogs," he says. These, and a couple of short breaks with the family in a year work as food for the mind and soul.

Part of a young sector that has seen some sharp ups and downs, Mayank Kumar, co-founder and managing director of edtech upGrad, says, "I've come to realise that my health and fitness are my own responsibility."

Every day, "rain or shine," he goes for a morning run. "It serves as an incredible stress-buster for me, also giving me the chance to slow down and reflect." Recently, he says, his son and wife have picked up on running as well, which allows him to spend more time with them.

For Arun Alagappan, executive vice-chairman of Coromandel International and a member of the Murugappa family, horses serve as a stress-buster. Dedicated time to nature and horses is his passion. "I don't engage in practices like yoga; instead, I believe in maintaining a clear mind," he says. "I find solace in the company of horses and have my own setup for them."

Manojit Saha, Shilpa Ayan Dutt, Veenu Samdhan, Sohini Das, Poorvika Abbar & Shine Jacob contributed to this report