

The balanced researcher

Strategies for busy researchers



Hugh Kearns Maria Gardiner



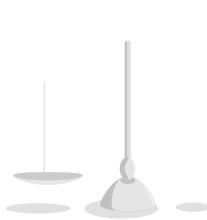
How's your balance?

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

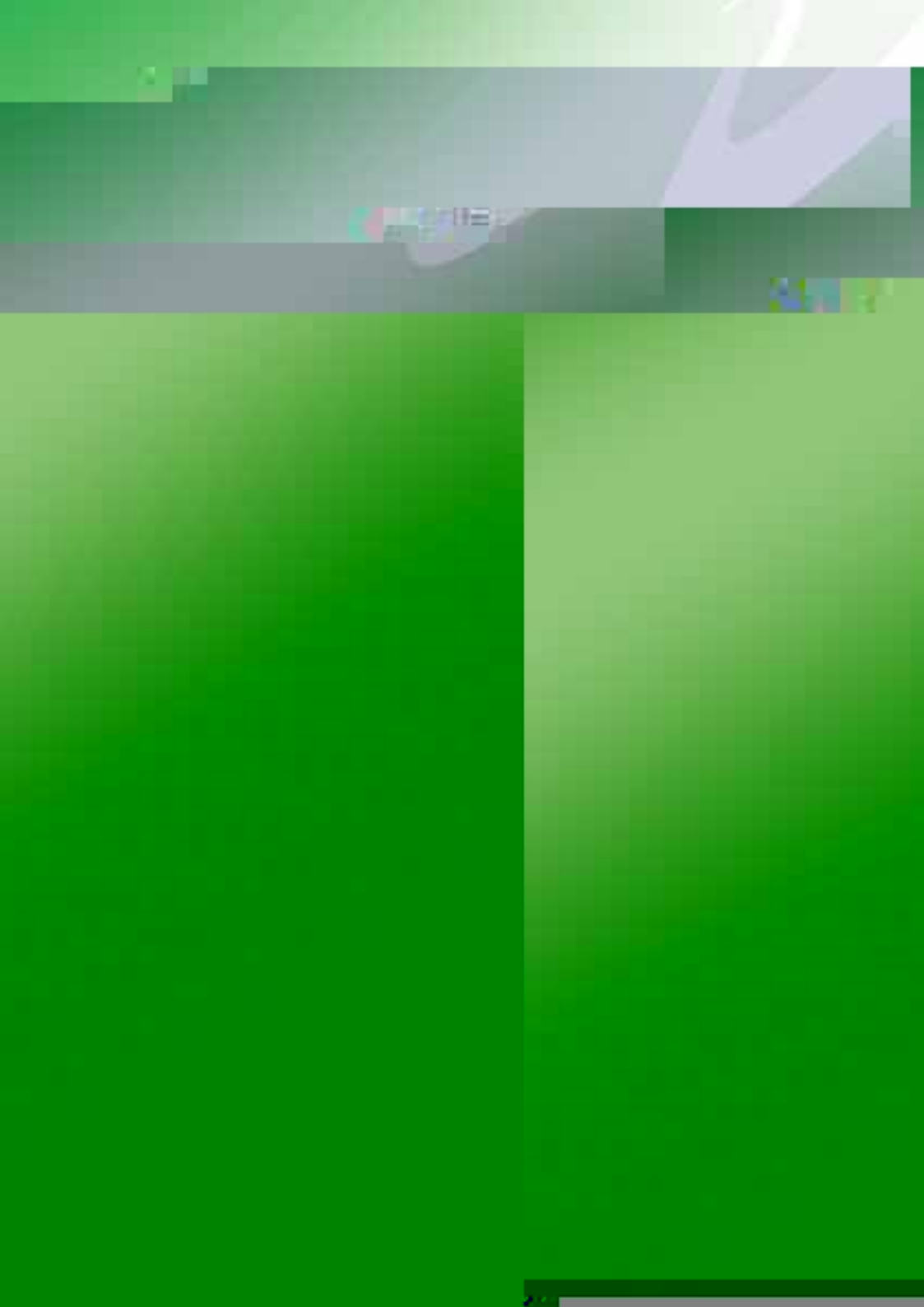


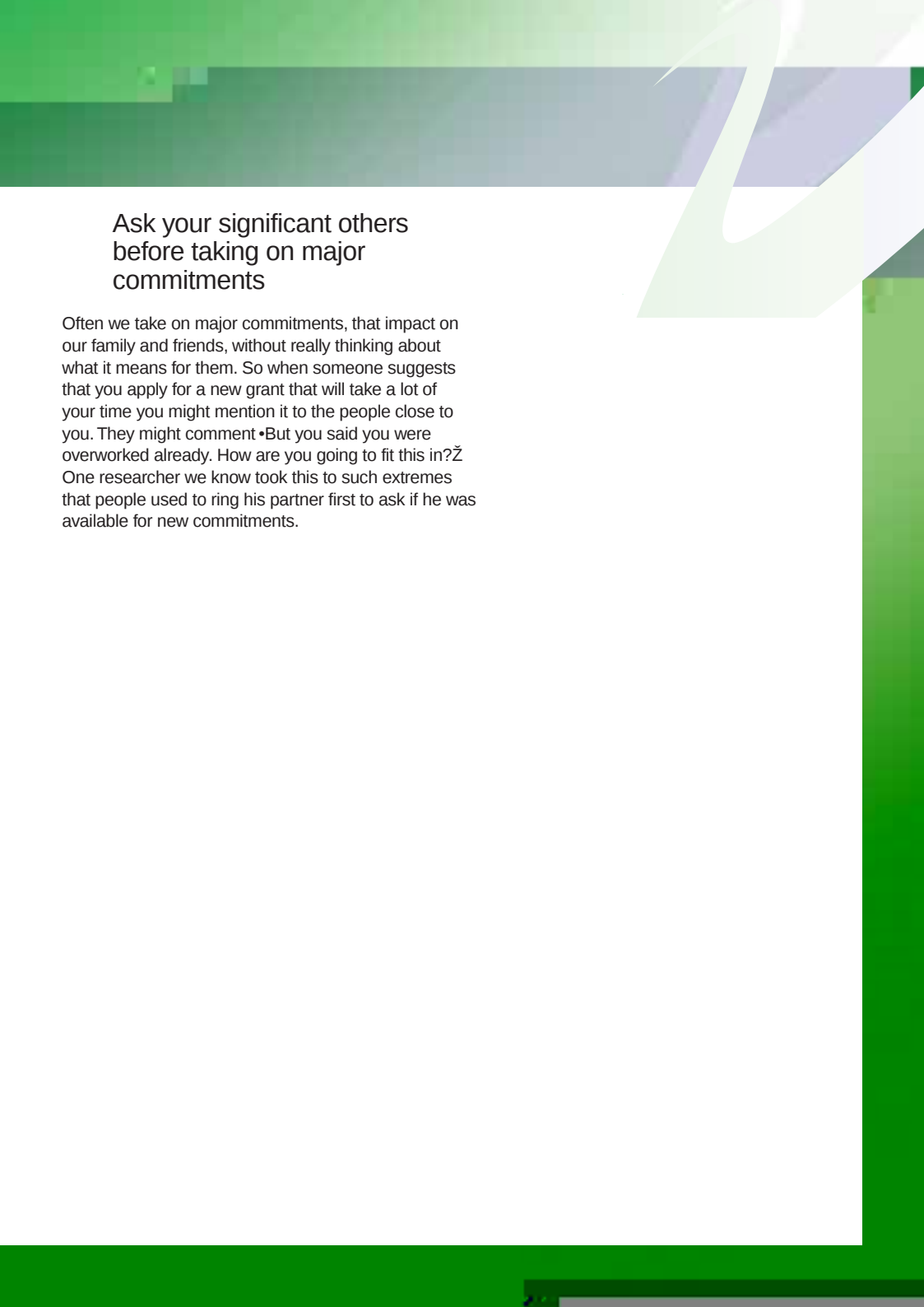


Table 1. The number of children in each age group and the number of children in each age group who were in the sample at baseline and follow-up

Age group	Baseline	Follow-up
12-14	10	10
15-17	10	10
18-20	10	10
21-23	10	10
24-26	10	10
27-29	10	10
30-32	10	10
33-35	10	10
36-38	10	10
39-41	10	10
42-44	10	10
45-47	10	10
48-50	10	10
51-53	10	10
54-56	10	10
57-59	10	10
60-62	10	10
63-65	10	10
66-68	10	10
69-71	10	10
72-74	10	10
75-77	10	10
78-80	10	10
81-83	10	10
84-86	10	10
87-89	10	10
90-92	10	10
93-95	10	10
96-98	10	10
99-101	10	10
102-104	10	10
105-107	10	10
108-110	10	10
111-113	10	10
114-116	10	10
117-119	10	10
120-122	10	10
123-125	10	10
126-128	10	10
129-131	10	10
132-134	10	10
135-137	10	10
138-140	10	10
141-143	10	10
144-146	10	10
147-149	10	10
150-152	10	10
153-155	10	10
156-158	10	10
159-161	10	10
162-164	10	10
165-167	10	10
168-170	10	10
171-173	10	10
174-176	10	10
177-179	10	10
180-182	10	10
183-185	10	10
186-188	10	10
189-191	10	10
192-194	10	10
195-197	10	10
198-200	10	10
201-203	10	10
204-206	10	10
207-209	10	10
210-212	10	10
213-215	10	10
216-218	10	10
219-221	10	10
222-224	10	10
225-227	10	10
228-230	10	10
231-233	10	10
234-236	10	10
237-239	10	10
240-242	10	10
243-245	10	10
246-248	10	10
249-251	10	10
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264-266	10	10
267-269	10	10
270-272	10	10
273-275	10	10
276-278	10	10
279-281	10	10
282-284	10	10
285-287	10	10
288-290	10	10
291-293	10	10
294-296	10	10
297-299	10	10
300-302	10	10
303-305	10	10
306-308	10	10
309-311	10	10
312-314	10	10
315-317	10	10
318-320	10	10
321-323	10	10
324-326	10	10
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330-332	10	10
333-335	10	10
336-338	10	10
339-341	10	10
342-344	10	10
345-347	10	10
348-350	10	10
351-353	10	10
354-356	10	10
357-359	10	10
360-362	10	10
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366-368	10	10
369-371	10	10
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459-461	10	10
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465-467	10	10
468-470	10	10
471-473	10	10
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525-527	10	10
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537-539	10	10
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549-551	10	10
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564-566	10	10
567-569	10	10
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576-578	10	10
579-581	10	10
582-584	10	10
585-587	10	10
588-590	10	10
591-593	10	10
594-596	10	10
597-599	10	10
600-602	10	10
603-605	10	10
606-608	10	10
609-611	10	10
612-614	10	10
615-617	10	10
618-620	10	10
621-623	10	10
624-626	10	10
627-629	10	10
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633-635	10	10
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705-707	10	10
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714-716	10	10
717-719	10	10
720-722	10	10
723-725	10	10
726-728	10	10
729-731	10	10
732-734	10	10
735-737	10	10
738-740	10	10
741-743	10	10
744-746	10	10
747-749	10	10
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846-848	10	10
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855-857	10	10
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861-863	10	10
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882-884	10	10
885-887	10	10
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969-971	10	10
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975-977	10	10
978-980	10	10
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990-992	10	10
993-995	10	10
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1005-1007	10	10
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1014-1016	10	10
1017-1019	10	10
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1023-1025	10	10
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1065-1067	10	10
1068-1070	10	10
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1098-1100	10	10
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1167-1169	10	10
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1173-1175	10	10
1176-1178	10	10
1179-1181	10	10
1182-1184	10	10
1185-1187	10	10
1188-1190	10	10
1191-1193	10	10
1194-1196	10	10
1197-1199	10	10
1200-1202	10	10
1203-1205	10	10
1206-1208	10	10
1209-1211	10	10
1212-1214	10	10
1215-1217	10	10
1218-1220	10	10
1221-1223		

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 your calendar, but it or arranging to do it. For example, tell your kids to do their homework after school and before dinner. Or join a knitting group.

It's as difficult, eg saying no to a request for a piece of work, or saying no to your head, then give yourself a reward (eg might be having a cup of tea or checking your emails! But the reward must come AFTER the work is done.)

It's made.

It's a chance!
It's a weekend break
It's a partner
It's a (bring work!)

It's it right now
It's a gut?

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

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