

Balancing Work, Life, and Everything In Between

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If you're reading this while juggling assignments, a part-time job, laundry that's been sitting for two weeks, and the existential crisis that comes with being an international student, welcome. You're in the right place.

I'm writing this blog on a plane headed back to Toronto. It's the middle of the semester, I've got deadlines waiting for me like a buffet I didn't ask for, and yet I'm here. Reflecting. Thinking about how I've spent the last four years chasing the ever-elusive idea of balance.

Spoiler: I haven't found it. But I've learned how to survive without losing myself completely, and that's what this guide is for.

You're not just a student

International students don't just carry a course load - we carry responsibility. We're navigating a new country, building a routine from scratch, missing our families, trying to afford groceries, wondering about PR, and constantly feeling like we have to make it worth it for ourselves, our parents, and the sacrifices made. I don't come from a wealthy background, so failure was never an option. But no one told me how heavy that pressure would feel.

Burnout is real

There was a phase where I was doing it all, including regular five-hour round trips to Mississauga from Toronto, working, studying, volunteering, interning, and side hustling. At some point, I had to admit I was just meeting deadlines and not learning anything.

If you're constantly running on fumes, that's not ambition. That's burnout in disguise.

My manager saw it before I did. She gently reminded me that prioritizing and communicating are skills, too, not weaknesses. That conversation changed everything. I realized I wasn't being fair to my internship or myself.

You don't need to hit "rock bottom" to realize you're stretched too thin. Sometimes it just takes a pause, a conversation, or a whiteboard moment.

So... How Do You Navigate *Everything*?

Plan and Organise

The biggest lesson undergrad has taught me is the art of being organised. I use Microsoft Teams to schedule *everything, including* meetings, assignments, and even my breaks (yes, it tells me to breathe). I pair it with a Dollarama planner for the day-to-day life stuff: cleaning, cooking, laundry. A physical whiteboard reminds me of my values: confidence, gratitude, kindness, and respect. My room even has a hanging calendar with key dates like competition deadlines and exam weeks. It might sound intense, but it keeps me grounded.

✂ **Resources:** The [learning centre](#) provides resources to develop learning skills like time management, study practices, and more, including workshops, 1:1 coaching, and online content.

There are many other tools available, including planners, fitness apps, journaling apps, and more, to help you balance your daily routine. You can find the list [here](#).

Say, thank you, but NO

I used to say yes to everything, every group project, every club event, and every extra shift. It felt like I had to. Like if I didn't show up for everything, I'd fall behind.

But I wasn't "getting ahead." I was just... tired. All. The. Time.

Every yes is a no to something else, and sometimes that "something else" is your peace of mind, your sleep, or that dream you haven't had time to chase. Setting boundaries doesn't make you selfish, it makes you sustainable.

✂ **Resources:** Check out the [Seneca Leadership Program](#) to build confidence in advocating for yourself.

You can also take free online courses on your [student LinkedIn Learning](#) on assertiveness, setting boundaries, and time management.

Stay Healthy

Yes, yes, we've all heard it: eat healthy, sleep 8 hours, take breaks. But let's be real, life doesn't always let you. Most of us are eating leftovers at midnight while replying to emails we forgot about. And that's fine, health doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to be *intentional*. Here's what's helped me stay semi-functional:

- Bulk cooking saves lives – I cook once a day, eat twice. Finals week me, is always grateful.
- Move in tiny ways – Walk between classes, stretch in your PJs, or dance while folding laundry (my go-to).
- Sleep > Everything – I’ve retired my “I survived on 3 hours of sleep” phase. Rest is the new flex.
- Snack smart – I keep dry fruits bedside for late-night hunger. Find your version of easy fuel.

📌 **Resources:** Check out the [Seneca Athletics and Recreation](#) for recreational on-campus activities.

For a free healthy food option, register for the [Seneca Soup Program](#).

Additionally, you can visit the [SSF calendar](#) for any other wellness or food events.

Ask for Support

Maybe it’s friends, maybe it’s your professor, maybe it’s therapy. Even if you think you don’t “need” it, having support makes life so much easier. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. No one’s got it all figured out, even if it looks like they do.

📌 **Resources:** [Seneca Learning Centre](#) is here to provide academic support.

[Seneca Counselling Services](#) is here to provide personal support.

[Seneca Accessible Learning Services](#) is here to ensure equal access to your needs and academic opportunities.

[Seneca Immigration Specialists](#) are here to provide support with immigration requirements.

[Seneca Student Support Groups](#) are inclusive spaces to build a community connection.

[Seneca Peer Wellness Program](#) is here to engage, support, and encourage self-care and wellness.

Be Flexible

Some days, you’ll nail a presentation and clean your entire apartment. Other days, you’ll barely get through your to-do list, and that’s okay. Balance isn’t about doing everything perfectly every day. It’s about not letting one part of your life consume the rest. Leave space to rest. That *is* part of being productive.

📌 **Resources:** Pause by attending fun and wellness events by [SSF](#), [Athletics and Recreation](#), [Student Life](#), and the [Peer Wellness](#) teams.

Check out [Seneca Works](#) for on-campus job opportunities that align work with school.

"So...have I mastered finding work-life balance?"

Not exactly. There's no magic formula for finding balance. No app, no planner, no blog (not even this one) will make everything easy. But you can learn to carry the load differently.

You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to say no. You are allowed to ask for help. And most importantly, you are allowed to define success in your own way — even if that means eating instant noodles at 1 AM while watching Netflix and working on a cover letter.

Here's what I've learned:

- Balance isn't a 50/50 split. Some weeks you'll work more, some weeks you'll rest more. That doesn't mean you're failing.
- Productivity doesn't define your worth. Taking care of yourself is a form of success.
- You can chase your goals and take breaks. Hustle culture won't tell you this, but joy and rest are also priorities.

You didn't come this far to lose yourself in the grind.

You came here to build something — a career, a life, a version of yourself that you're proud of. And that version deserves peace just as much as it deserves success.

So pause. Breathe. Refill your water bottle. Message your mom back.

Balance isn't about perfection. It's about grace. And that, my friend, is something we can all practice: one messy, beautiful, chaotic day at a time. And hey, trust me, you've got this.

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