

How to Practice the Art of Life Balance

A collection of inspiring life balance resources and stories from some of today's most extraordinary bloggers



Compiled by

Stacey Hoffer Weckstein

CreateaBalance.com

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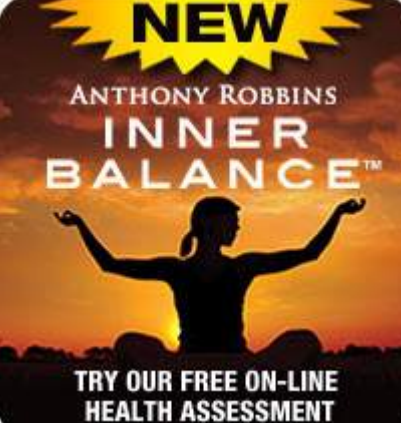


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Why Read this eBook?

You should read this book if you are looking to explore the practice of life balance.

This eBook is an inspiring resource for people who need help taking steps in the right direction towards practicing the art of life balance.

After reading this eBook take time to answer the following questions:

- What does life balance mean to you?
- Why do you need life balance?
- How do you practice life balance?
- What do you want to incorporate into your life?
- What are the characteristics of someone practicing the art of life balance?
- What are your essential components for life balance?

Why this eBook was Created...

This eBook is the result of the [Life Balance Group Writing Project](#). I created this eBook to provide inspiring resources and stories for people who are seeking to practice the art of life balance.

Life balance means different things to different people.

What does life balance mean to you?

Table of Contents

<i>How to Practice the Art of Life Balance, Stacey Hoffer Weckstein, Create a Balance.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Getting Your Groove Back, Shann Vander Leek, True Balance Life Coaching.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>12 Superb Ways to Be Happier, Marelisa Fabrega, Abundance Blog.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Life Balance, Alex Shalman, AlexShalman.com.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Should The Poor Mexican Fisherman Give Up Contentment for Cash? Evelyn Lim, Attraction Mind Map.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>How to Balance Life Effortlessly, Avani Mehta, Avani-Mehta.com.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The Awesomeness of Life, Stephen Cox, Balanced Existence.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Overworked & Overwhelmed? Achieving Life Balance Amidst Chaos, Shamelle, The Enhanced Life.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Life Balance, Ankur Garg, Excerpts From My Life.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>A Balanced Life, Joseph, Explore Life Blog.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Practicing Balance in Your Life, Jenny Mannion, JennyMannion.com.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Life Balance: A Very Personal Pyramid, Lance, Jungle of Life.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>The See Saw: a Metaphor for Life Balance, Stacey Shipman, Let it Flow.....</i>	<i>42</i>

Emotional Balance, Robin Birch, Let's Live Forever.....44

Teeter-Totter Tribulations, Wendi Kelly, Life's Little Inspirations.....48

Finding Balance Between Creativity and Family, Lisa Leonard, Lisa Leonard Online.....52

Life Balance and Stress, Rob McPhillips, Life Without Conflict54

Awakening To a Balance Life, Davina, Loving Pulse58

Work. Life. It's All About Living, Maria Gajewski, Never The Same River Twice61

It's Never Too Late, Prem Rao, People at Work & Play65

Reach for Life Balance, BC Doan, Reach Beyond Limits67

What Is Life Balance & Is It Achievable For Everyone? Kelly Rigby, She-Power.....70

Live Simple To Create Balance In Your Life, Jack Rugile, Simple Sapien.....75

Career and Life Balance, Stefanie Zizzo, Stefanie Zizzo Career & Life Coach.....78

Following the Path...One Step at a Time, Jean, Stress to Power.....79

The Key to Happiness and Balance is Right With You, Just Learn to Use It, Maya, Think Maya.....82

Life Balance, Part Two: It's a Jigsaw Puzzle, Shelly Kneupper Tucker, This Eclectic Life.....93

Refresh Again, Transformative Living.....96

Juggling Life’s Balls, Urban Panther, Urban Panther’s Lair.....98

***Achieve Success While Maintaining a Healthy Work Life Balance
Kathy Hendershot-Hurd, Virtual Impax..... 100***

Be an Optimist, Dave Jones, Your Friendly CPA.....103

Balancing the Unbalancable, Kip de Moll, Zen and the Art of the Midlife Crisis.....106

How to Practice the Art of Life Balance — By Stacey Hoffer Weckstein, [Create a Balance](http://CreateaBalance.com)

I believe life balance means different things to different people. To me, life balance is about balancing the demands of being everything to everyone while not losing my sense of self, my needs, and my passions in the process. Life balance means balancing the needs of my inner authentic self and the needs of all of the other things that demand my time, attention, and energy.

Life balance is a process, not a destination. I work hard to incorporate my needs and passions into my life. And since my needs and passions can change overtime, I also work on assessing my needs and passions on a regular basis. After years of living and breathing my passion for life balance, I have developed a life balance framework that works. Here is a quick summary...

1. Spend significant time discovering your authentic needs and passions.
2. Write down your life balance intentions and look at them often.
3. Hold yourself accountable.
4. Practice being selfish. Self nurture and self nourish your body, mind, and spirit.
5. Take action. Be bold and daring and move forward with your dreams.
6. Celebrate your life and all of your success. Life can be hard sometimes but there is a lot to celebrate if you can find time for gratitude.
7. Share your stories with others. What you focus on expands so talk about your life balance goals as much as possible.
8. Reflect and assess your actions on a regular basis to determine if you are off balance in any areas of your life.
9. Repeat the process and continue on your journey (back to #1).

One thing I know for sure is that life balance is a process/journey, not a destination.

Getting Your Groove Back – Life Balance Series

— By Shann Vander Leek, [True Balance Life Coaching](#)

What are you most grateful for? Take 5 minutes and write down everything in your life that brings you joy. Ready? Set! ... BEGIN!

On the flip side ...

What would you love to be rid of? Take 5 more minutes to list the activities in your life that have become a drag and have run their course. You really do have the time to do this exercise in awareness. Ready? Set! ... Begin!

Simple ...

Nothing more than a quick comparison and contrast of what inspires you and recharges your batteries compared to the things that drain your energy and suck the life out of you.

When you focus on this exercise you will begin to experience some clarity, relief and order. Want to take this to the next level? I thought you might.

Groovy Action Plan

- What is the most audacious thing you would like to do?
- What small treat or treasure will bring you joy today?
- What stimulates your intellectual curiosity?
- What stale responsibilities can you walk away from?
- Is there ONE habit you can change to improve your life?

12 Superb Ways to Be Happier

— By Marelisa Fabrega, [Abundance Blog](#)

1. Forget the myth that happiness is elusive and unattainable, and that it's something that either happens or it doesn't. **Being happy is a choice.**

2. Expand your understanding of **health** to include happiness. Here's a quote from Deepak Chopra, one of the world's foremost experts on the mind-body connection:

“Health is not just the absence of disease. It's an inner joyfulness that should be ours all the time - a state of positive well-being.”

3. The term Gross National Happiness (GNH) was first expressed by the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and it's rooted in the Buddhist notion that the ultimate purpose of life is inner happiness. Wangchuck maintains that economic growth does not necessarily lead to contentment, so instead of merely focusing on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), he focuses on the four pillars of GNH: economic self-reliance, a pristine environment, the preservation and promotion of Bhutan's culture, and good governance in the form of a democracy. Follow Bhutan's lead: instead of simply calculating your net worth, **start calculating your net happiness.**

4. **Living in the moment**, which we aim to achieve through the practice of mindfulness, has been shown to be linked to positive emotions and physical well-being.

5. Research shows that **meditation** stimulates the left anterior temporal region of the brain, which is active during sensations of happiness and positive emotion.

6. Enrique Peñalosa, the former mayor of Bogota, Colombia (population 7 million), sought to **create a city of joy**—in terms of transportation and urban design—that supported social interaction and equity, and that honored the sacredness of people and the environment. During his tenure he created urban infrastructure and public space that gave priority to children and to those who don't own an automobile. Here is a quote from Peñalosa:

“We had to build a city not for businesses or automobiles, but for children and thus for people. Instead of building highways, we restricted car use. We invested in high-quality sidewalks, pedestrian streets, parks, bicycle paths, libraries; we got rid of thousands of cluttering commercial signs and we planted trees. All our everyday efforts have one objective: happiness.”

Organize your space around the concept of creating happiness.

7. Let go of idea that happiness equals consumption. Positive psychology is affirming that once we meet our basic needs, the experience of authentic happiness has much more to do with intrinsic factors such as self acceptance, meaning, empathy and love.

8. Act in ways that are socially and environmentally responsible. You may take great pleasure in drinking your morning coffee, and this pleasure can be accompanied by feelings of satisfaction and happiness. However, if you're not drinking fair trade coffee, that happiness is not sustainable.

9. Dan Baker, a clinical psychologist whose practice draws on the science of happiness, writes that the greatest barrier to individual happiness is **fear**. He concludes that all of our fear can be grouped into three basic fears: survival; fear of not having enough, and; fear of not being enough.

He explains that as long as we are operating out of fear, rather than **love**, we will consistently pursue happiness in ways that are destructive for ourselves and others.

10. In the book [Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things](#), McDonough and Braungart pose the following question; “What if humans designed products and systems that celebrate an abundance of human creativity, culture and productivity? That are so intelligent and safe, our species leaves an ecological footprint to delight in, not lament?” Ask yourself how you can apply this concept in your life.

11. Encourage your city's major to adopt the "Slow City Manifesto". In his book [In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed](#), Carl Honoré explores the benefits of slowing down and describes the Slow City movement in his first chapter. He explains that many Italian cities have taken the Slow City pledge and are working to improve the quality of life of their citizens:

"The Citta Slow manifesto contains fifty-five pledges, such as cutting noise and traffic, increasing green spaces and pedestrian zones; backing local farmers and the shops, markets and restaurants that sell their produce; promoting technology that protects the environment; preserving local aesthetic and culinary traditions; and fostering a spirit of hospitality and neighbourliness."

12. Call the "[Laughter Yoga Hotline](#)" and participate in a laughter yoga session in the privacy of your home (it's free, but you may have to pay a long distance fee depending on your phone service plan).

Life Balance

— By Alex Shalman, AlexShalman.com

“To acquire balance means to achieve that happy medium between the minimum and the maximum that represents your optimum. The minimum is the least you can get by with. The maximum is the most you’re capable of. The optimum is the amount or degree of anything that is most favorable toward the ends you desire.” ~Nido Qubein

I see life balance as a table with 10 legs. All legs must be balanced, or else your table is going to be shaky. Nobody wants to sit at a table that’s going to shake on them, and likewise no one wants to be the sole-proprietor of a shaky life.

On the other hand, it’s practically impossible to be balanced in all aspects of your life. It certainly isn’t human nature to find our personal equilibrium at a place where everything is balanced. I think balance is an ideal, and a fun life challenge to strive for.

If your life is severely off balance then aspects of your life that are low will impede the growth and success of those areas that are high. For example, it’s hard to have good relationships with friends and family when you have temperament and emotional control problems.

10 Essential Components of life Balance

1. Health & Fitness
2. Mental development & Education
3. Work, Career, & Finances
4. Social life & Relationships
5. Home & Family
6. Character, Integrity, Ethics & Virtues
7. Emotion control & development

8. Daily habits & routines
9. Life purpose & contribution
10. Spiritual development

These 10 components are all interwoven within your life. None of them are independent of each other. The closer all of these components are to each other, meaning the more balance you have, the more they'll act as support for each other in your personal growth.

The Imbalanced Life

Let's be practical and realistic. Who do you know whose whole life is a perfect balance? I can think of no human being, nor any fictional character who has achieved this ideal. This doesn't stop me from believing the optimal balance is something we should strive for.

In my own life I think I'm doing fairly well with life balance. However, at the current moment the finance leg of my table is doing sub-par to the rest of my areas. Instead of letting this bring the other areas of my life down I'm figuring out ways to deal with the situation in a positive way and I would even go so far as to say that it is a challenge that I look forward to.

I don't want to waste money on eating out. I remedy this by buying healthy food and cooking it myself or with Marina. Not only am I spending less per meal than I would at a restaurant but I have leftovers for up to 3 days. I'm also not in a position where I can purchase too much entertainment, so I've made exercise as my number one source of fun (next to writing articles for you guys!).

My [diet](#) consists of eating well, creating daily habits, exercising, and fasting. All of these components serve to increase the self-discipline portion of my character. This reflects at work, at my internship, and at the amount of articles I have been putting out lately.

I believe that because the legs are pretty well-balanced that instead of my finances bringing everything down, the rest of the components act together to maintain balance.

Am I really broke if I still live below my means and take great pleasure in my life?

What does life balance mean to you?

Should The Poor Mexican Fisherman Give Up Contentment for Cash? — By Evelyn Lim, [Attraction Mind Map](#)

In a quiet Mexican fishing village, an American who was on vacation saw a local fisherman unloading his catch. He decided to approach him.

The American asked the fisherman, “Why are you finishing your day so early?” The Mexican replied “Oh Senor, I have caught enough to feed my family and a little extra to sell for today. It is now time to go for lunch with my family and have a siesta. In the afternoon, I can play with my kids. In the evening, I will go to the cantina, drink a little tequila and play the guitar.”

The business professor was horrified at the fisherman’s lack of motivation to succeed. He answered, “If you stay out at sea until late afternoon, you will easily catch twice as much fish. You can sell the extra, save up the money and in six months, maybe nine, you will be able to buy a bigger and better boat, and hire some crew. Then you’ll be able to buy a second fishing boat and hire another crew.”

He continued, “In another year or two, you will have the capital to buy a second fishing boat and hire another crew. If you follow this business plan, in six or seven years, you will be the proud owner of a large fishing fleet.”

“Just imagine that! Then you can move your head office to Mexico City, or even to L.A. After only three or four years in LA, you float your company on the stockmarket giving yourself, as CEO, a generous salary package with substantial share options. In a few more years – listen to this! – You initiate a company share buy-back scheme, which will make you a multi-millionaire! Guaranteed!”

The American got very excited at the prospect himself. He said, “I definitely know these things. I’m a well known professor at the US Business School.”

The Mexican fisherman listened intently at what the animated American had to say.

When the professor had finished, the Mexican asked him, “But, Senor Professor, what can a person do after getting millions of dollars?” Now, the American professor hadn’t thought that far. He was taken aback by the question.

So he quickly figured out an answer “Amigo! With all that dough, you can retire. Yeah! Retire for life! You can buy a little villa with a picturesque fishing village like this one, and purchase a small boat for going fishing in the morning. You can have lunch with your wife every day, and a siesta in the afternoon, with nothing to worry you. In the afternoon, you can spend quality time with your kids, and after dinner in the evening, play guitar with your friends in the cantina, drinking tequila. Yeah, with all the money, my friend, you can retire and take it easy.” Puzzled with the American’s suggestion, the Mexican fisherman replied, “but, Senor Professor, I do that already!”

Ajahn Brahm told the above story in last Friday’s talk on [“Dealing with Uncertainties in Life”](#). You can also read this story in [Who Ordered This Truckload of Dung?](#), a book written by him. Ajahn Brahm had related the same tale last Friday, to illustrate that contentment is to be found in the Now. He pointed out that we do not need to get materially rich first before we can feel happy.

Contentment or Cash?

In the story, the Mexican fisherman may be poor but he is contented. But what if he has a desire to afford a better life for his kids? Realistically, most of us so have dreams of a more abundant life. We would like to be able to afford beyond the basic necessities. We desire the flexibility of working as and when we want to, without struggle and worry and to have excess time to pursue our various interests. Is it possible to rewrite the story so that the Mexican fisherman (or you for that matter) can have it all - money, loving relationships, health, and joy - without any major sacrifices?

How would you strike a balance in your waking hours for today, whilst working towards your dreams?

How to Balance Life Effortlessly

— By Avani Mehta, Avani-Mehta.com

Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. - Robert Fulghum

Life Balance is a topic which needs no introduction. All of us focus on balancing different areas of our life - work, family, personal, social etc. We desire each of these life areas to do well and sometimes we do a lot of juggling to make this possible.

However, wouldn't it be great if we could remove the craziness, the rushing and struggling and make the entire process of life balance effortless?

How To Balance Life Effortlessly

1. Be Clear Of Your Priorities

Like they say, no one ever wished to have spent more time in office on their death bed. Why then do we keep doing such things (work ourselves to death)? What's the point of running after and achieving goals which don't mean anything later on? No matter how good we become at balancing life, we will not be happy if we are moving in the wrong direction.

Being clear of priorities means finding out what is important and in which order. Separate the essentials from the non-essentials. The lesser things you have on your plate, the easier it will be to balance them.

2. Strengthen The Common Base

One way of balancing life is to pick each life area and work on it. The second way to balance is to work on the common base i.e. work on those areas which will directly create a positive impact on all aspects of life. Achieve maximum output while providing minimum input by working on -

- ***Timeless Principles***

We can only imagine how utterly confusing life would be if we were to lie all the time or keep running away from truth. Where would life balance be, if we are not true to our word? What would the purpose of life balance be if we cannot come from love and be love to our loved ones? We would spend far more time creating troubles and time pressing issues for ourselves rather than make life better.

By aligning self with timeless principles of truth, love, integrity etc we enable ourselves to take right decisions even if they are difficult and stay true to them. These principles form an unwavering core within us, they give us the stability required to balance ourselves and our lives.

- ***Mind, Body & Spirit***

Life, family, work, society, friends ... if all of these have one obvious thing in common, then that is you. And if you are to manage and balance all of these well, shouldn't you be balanced and fit as well? A weak mind, body or spirit will not be able to do justice to either life areas.

By focusing on growing, strengthening and balancing yourself, you enable yourself to give each area deserving work and attention. (This of course is not a reason to become self centered and focus only on self.)

- ***Time Management***

Usually the topic of balancing life revolves around proper time management which is fair enough since there are only 24 hours in a day. We cannot create more time hence, we rather learn to manage it well.

Proper time management includes creating a work-life boundary, creating family/personal time, increasing productivity by increased/decreased use of technology, forming better habits - being organized, reducing clutter etc.

3. Stand For Yourself

Whatever effort you put in to balance your life, know your priorities, understand and work on the timeless principles, yourself or your time management is going to be

useless if you do not stand for yourself. There are three essential skills which should become second nature to you if you wish to stand for yourself. They are -

- **Being Decisive**

Learn to make your own decisions and follow them through. Don't allow anyone else to make decisions for you. No one understands your priorities, principles and commitments better than you. Taking guidance from your mentors is another matter, but the decision should always be yours. If people are going to take decisions for you, then you will keep trying to balance the outcomes of those decisions. To change the output, work on input.

- **Saying No**

Although saying no forms an important part of time management and being decisive, it deserves a special mention because without this skill, you will not be able to channel your life in the direction you want. If you wish to separate the essentials and non-essentials in your life, saying no will be required, if you wish to stay true to your principles, saying no will be required. 'No' is "the word" in your vocabulary which you should be most comfortable using.

- **Taking Responsibility**

Everything that has happened, is happening and will happen in your life is your responsibility. While external forces do influence our lives in undesired ways, if we give away responsibility, we give away the power to make a difference. Hence, no matter what happens, whether your decisions have gone bad, or someone else's, whether someone else has created havoc in your lives, cheated you or not stayed true to their word, take responsibility and keep the power over your life with you. Without taking the responsibility to constantly work on balancing life no matter what, a balanced life is not possible.

4. Myths About Balancing

Myths usually are trouble makers. They seem true to us and we naturally follow our truth. However, when things don't go as planned, we fail to identify these as the cause and keep repeating our mistakes. There are three major myths about balancing as well.

When people begin thinking about balancing life and start working on it, these three myths create havoc and confusion.

- **Balance Means “Equal”**

Balance means equal and hence, balancing life means distributing time equally between all areas of life. This is a myth.

There will always be a time when one area of our life requires more attention than other. Balancing life means to listen to and be aware of each area and its requirements. Balancing life means accessing the wisdom within us and allocating time and attention as required to each area.

- **Balancing Formula Is Universal**

Everyone seeks to balance life. If one person has cracked the code and found how to balance life, it is ok to apply the same formula in our lives. Since we all are human beings, the formula to balance life must be universally applicable. This is a myth.

Even though all of us are humans, we are unique individuals with unique life, priorities and needs. We can get inspired and pick and choose ideas to apply to our lives, we can learn from others success and failures; but we cannot do a copy paste. A blind copy-paste will not work. You can say, to each, his own formula.

- **Balance Is All About My Life**

We think that when we learn to manage our time, balance our life, live life based on our priorities, we have succeeded. We need to focus on balancing only our life. This is a myth.

While predominantly balancing is about your life, an important aspect to balancing life is balancing others lives as well. Since we live in an inter-dependant world, lives tend to be inter-dependant and so does balance. For instance if life of our spouse or sibling is not balanced, sooner or later it will impact our life balance. Moreover, if their life imbalance is because of us, then it becomes our responsibility to make sensible changes in our life so that both lives can be balanced.

5. Random Tips & Ideas

Here are some random tips and ideas on and about balancing life.

- Start small. Don't plan to transform your entire life one shot. Go slow and steady.
- Pick up what seems easy enough to implement first. See positive results, gain confidence and then dive into the difficult ones.
- Have patience. It takes time to put everything back in balance.
- Stay aware of your life, stay alert so that you can bring balance back as soon as imbalance creeps in.
- Be present. A lot of imbalance in life is created because we are not truly present in the moment.
- Stay physically, emotionally and mentally in the same place.
- Balance is not about 'either/or'. Balance is about 'and'. Be creative to find solutions to your problem. Sometimes, you can have the cake and eat it too.
- Balance is about holding on and letting go. Key is in figuring out what to hold onto and what to let go.
- Balancing life is an ongoing process. It never ends.
- Enjoy the process. If you are not enjoying, then you are probably doing something wrong. Remember, the idea is to balance 'effortlessly'.

The Awesomeness of Life

— By Stephen Cox, [Balanced Existence](#)

Have you ever sat quietly and just wondered at the awesomeness of life? Have you ever considered the colossal mystery that is existence? I'd be surprised if you hadn't but perhaps you may not have given the subject much thought. If that sounds like you then try for just a moment to describe "existence".

If you have given such questions a certain amount of thought then like me you probably noticed how very wondrous and strange the world and our very existence at this time, in this place, in this manner is. Don't you find it amazing that all this has undertaken the formality of actually existing?

"A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty." ~ Albert Einstein

Considering the nature of the universe it is very apparent at this time that the universe emulates itself on all levels. The universe is apparently holographic. The nature of a hologram is such that even the smallest piece of the hologram is an exact replica of the entire hologram. Scale is something produced by limited human perceptions as is time and disconnection as opposed to the gigantic all encompassing present and interdependence or oneness.

There is no matter as such. Everything is consciousness observing consciousness. The world is not stranger than we know. It is stranger than we can know!

It is amazing to know that every one of our cells have the exact same functions as our macro body does. Our cells breath air, eat food, have circulatory systems, and eliminate waste to name just a few emulations. Every one of our billions of cells is like this. Together they form our macro-body. The universe is like those Russian dolls that stack inside each other.

“At the bottom every man knows well enough that he is a unique human being, only once on this earth; and by no extraordinary chance will such a marvelously picturesque piece of diversity in unity as he is, ever be put together a second time.” ~ Nietzsche

I will always remember as a child I sat comfortably in my father’s lap. I would hold his big heavy calloused hand in my own small child hands. Sitting there I would turn his hand over and then back again in a simply amazed and fascinated examination. Today I look at my own hand and witness a mystery that many of the greatest minds that have ever lived have failed to solve. I close my fist. Mind over matter.

Some of us may have lost our childlike wonder. I know for me personally the more I read, the more I observe and experience the more wondrous I grow. I feel the totality of my personality, my multiplicity of interests and evolving behavioral patterns are likely well beyond any one person’s ability to grasp. Including my own.

I am quite simply a very strange person and am willing to bet that in reality we all are. There is so much more to our lives, to this existence, then material things. There is much more to existence then the subjects of fixation by our limited physical senses. The deeper one goes within. Within becomes beyond. We truly are strangers in a strange land. Take a moment to wonder.

Overworked & Overwhelmed? Achieving Life Balance Amidst Chaos — By Shamelle, [The Enhanced Life](#)

Just as I stepped out to get some groceries this morning, I ran into one of my neighbors. In an effort to be polite (and make conversation!), I asked the typical mundane question, “How are you?”. I was expecting a “Fine thank you, how are you?” but his reply was far from that! To my surprise, he sighed and answered, “*Overworked & Overwhelmed*”. As a result, what seemed like a 5 minute door-step conversation, made it into a blog post!

The challenge of life balance in today's frenetically paced world is without question, one of the most significant struggles faced by most of us. We are overwhelmed by the day-to-day demands of our careers, families, constant tugging from cell phones, internet, a sluggish economy etc.. We often feel there is not enough time in our lives to do the things we need to do, let alone to do the things we want to do!

The meaning of life balance may vary for each individual, but one aspect *most* people agree on is that life balance revolves around time. Guess what, I don't agree with that and I will tell you why.

Twenty four hours. No scientist or philosopher or great individual of the past has ever gotten more! 24 hours... That's all we get. No amount of wishing, complaining, or creative time management will ever change that.

No matter how many personal productivity techniques we master, there will always be more to do than we can ever accomplish in the time we have available to us, no matter how much it is!

We're too busy because we choose to be. It's not really time management we should be looking into. Even though much has been written about proper time management, the advice is more focused on making more efficient use of time. Wake up early, delegate, etc In fact, too much emphasis on time management makes one obsessive,

always watching the clock and thinking about what task is scheduled next.

So perhaps it makes more sense to give precedence to **choice management** over time management?

Decide what comes first. Living a balanced life is about integrating components of your life that are truly important to you and realizing that sometimes you need to make choices about what has to come first.

For something that seems so self-evident to most people, it's remarkable how many of us struggle to put it to practice! Often, there is a myriad of excuses, the common one being, "I am not disciplined enough." Perhaps it's not a discipline problem at all. The problem is more often that the person has not yet sufficiently paid the price to get very clear about what matters most to them. What do you think?

By choosing what comes first, sometimes there are sacrifices. But living a balanced life doesn't require you to give 100 percent of yourself 100 percent of the time. There will be times when personal/family life and work collides but by knowing what's really most important to you and making choices based on this criterion, you'll be better able to balance your decisions.

Stay close to the shore with your commitments. People who are too nice rarely say no. Faced with too many options and too much pressure, we respond with too many "yes"s. Recognize that you don't have to agree to everything and with everyone. Use your priority criteria to identify requests that simply aren't worth your time.

You become what you expect? We all go through life expecting certain things. Rather than having more leisure time, we have less because we expect to do more and others expect us to do more.

Finally... Finding a balance in your life is an ongoing process. Life is in a constant state of change... a work in progress. Allow yourself the time to regularly reassess the direction in which you are heading. Are you on track, or have you temporarily derailed?

I am iterating again... We're too busy because we choose to be. What are your thoughts on this?

Life Balance — By Ankur Garg, [Excerpts From My Life](#)

What is Life Balance? Why is it important?

Just like a balanced diet would mean some amount of pulses, cereals and other nutritious items along with water in right quantity, and not just any one of them, a life balance according to me is about right mix of work and non-work activities a person should involve oneself. As the saying goes “Excess of everything is bad” delving too much into one activity takes away one of the interest, efficiency, health or sometimes even piece of mind. By doing other activities, one not only gets a change, but also rejuvenates oneself for a better overall performance on other fronts.

Now, delving into other activities mean not just physically but mentally as well. Most of the times we tend to be one-dimensional in the sense, chasing money and hence devoting oneself too much in work or sometimes in the name of work-life balance, one does involve in other stuff but is not completely there, while at work thinking of home, while at a picnic thinking of work so on and so forth. Life balance is exactly not about such a life.

Do everything that is important to you – could be as simple as going for a walk with your kid or sitting a tad longer in your bath tub one hour and giving a critical presentation the other hour in your office. Be your 100 percent wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

What is life balance according to me?

Life balance for me would mean – Going for jogging in the morning with my wife, sharing a little conversation with parents and other family members, reading newspaper before I get ready for work, a peacefully taken breakfast (I mention this because I am not able to practice this, often end up being hasty at this step) followed by my journey to work. At workplace, along with work, I would like to be good with people I am surrounded by, seeking the opportunity of socializing whenever I get a chance. Working efficiently and not staying late is another thing I hold important. On my way home, would

love to listen to Jagjit Singh. Finally once back home, no work and only family. While this defines a typical day, life balance would also mean occasional outings with friends and family to places in and out of my city, to recreate, to rejuvenate. Oh I forgot my visits to temple – simply love visiting Iskcon temples. To add to all this, spending time with myself – simply sitting and a light meditation is on my cards.

Presently, quite a part of it is what I still haven't incorporated for the reason I am a single. I do find time for an early jogging a couple of times in week and also I make sure I spend time with myself and with family members. As far as living every moment aware of present, I try breathing techniques to get back to my calm self and channelize the energies in my body.

What it means to me? Life balance is gaining more and more importance for me with time. What a conventional effort at workplace does not fetch results, striking a balance in life, a small and beautiful change in routine often comes along with solutions to problems in life. It has also improved my efficiency over a period of time. So it has become a part of living life.

A Balanced Life — By Joseph, [Explore Life Blog](#)

These times we live in can bring out the best in us. **Never in human history has the opportunities been greater** for us to realize our potential no matter what it is. We have unlimited options, information and resources available to make what we want happen. The full expression of who we are is best realized by attending to all aspects of our life. This attention to all aspects is called living a balanced life. **Here are the six aspects of a balanced life and practices for growth:**

1. **Mental** – Our minds shape our experience of life. How we think about things, how we talk to ourselves, cause us to be either satisfied with our lives or disappointed. A healthy mind is one that is aware, thoughtful and open. The practice of mindfulness is a powerful way to assure a positive mental state.
2. **Physical** – Our bodies are an important part of the quality of life we live. A well body eats healthy food, stays fit and gets enough rest. The body is the place of feelings, of action, of health and energy. Illness can come from being out of balance. The practice of walking in nature is great for the body and if you slow the walk down, at times, it becomes a calming meditation.
3. **Emotional** – We are emotional beings, we feel in response to our thoughts and environment. Emotions are energy moving through our bodies, neither good nor bad but simply us in relationship with the world around us. Our heart is our feeling center. Loving is a wonderful practice of opening our heart and feeling our aliveness.
4. **Social** – Humans are social animals that thrive on interactions. We live longer and are happier in supportive relationships. We belong to social groups, churches, organizations, and volunteer our time to be with others. We greatly value friendships and count on them to center our lives. The practice of getting together to share a meal and conversation is been around for a long time because it is so satisfying.

5. **Financial** – We go to work to make money; to provide for ourselves and our family. Working for others is often more secure. Working for ourselves can be challenging and rewarding and has greater potential for financial freedom. A financial practice encouraged by most every expert is to put at least 10% of your income into savings and investments and over the long run you can create financial security.

6. **Spiritual**- Each of us has a spirit/soul that is the life force that was here before we came into this body and will be there after we pass on. This spirit is not member of any religion but in union with the Source of all of creation. Nurturing your spirit is the practice of listening to the quiet wisdom within and being guided by your higher self.

If each as these six aspects of our life is cared for and grown, we will feel our life is in balance. The suggested practices for the different aspects are only one of many to explore. **The value of the practices is that they expand the possibilities within us** and serve as a reminder about the importance of living in balance. A balanced life is truly one of joy and freedom.

Practicing Balance in Your Life

— By Jenny Mannion, JennyMannion.com

I have to admit this one made me THINK REAL hard. Me, a recovering perfectionist, mom of 2 kids ages 9 and 5, blogger with 2 blogs and an active Group Writing Project, home owner, inventor actively working on my invention, friend, only child, wife, daughter.... hmm how DO I practice balance and what DOES Life Balance mean to me? Life Balance to me means KNOWING what is important to you in your life and making sure that when you do those things you are present and doing them consciously. If you do anything while your mind is somewhere else and keep coming back to “what isn’t being done” you will feel like you are juggling while on a unicycle instead of successfully balancing. Here are a few steps I use to maintain balance in my life as well as a favorite animation that won the Oscar for Best Animated Short in 1990 called “Balance” which I immediately think of when I hear the word “balance”.

Pick THINGS you Love to DO.

I have so many things I enjoy doing and people I enjoy being with and am so very grateful this is the case. If I allow myself to, I can become quite overwhelmed with what HASN’T been tended to... instead it is important that WHEN I am doing something I get the full enjoyment out of it. I love to dance, write, be with my friends and family, read, take long walks, cross country ski, meditate, cook, work on my invention, network and meet people, play games and to learn. If I tried to do ALL of these things daily I might go out of my mind — (but I’d be happy while losing it)! I have a clear picture of the things I enjoy most and keeping a picture of those things ensures it won’t be long before I do each of them again.

I even have a hierarchy of sorts... I KNOW if I don’t go for a long walk for a few days my body will be craving it and my mind just won’t work as well. Knowing this, KEEPS me aware that every few days I need to take a nice long walk and be grateful while I am doing it. If I am unfocused and “worrying about this or that” I will not come back having appreciated the walk - but rather more frazzled - and what would be the point in that? I

balance the things I love to do by first KNOWING what it is I love to do most, being conscious and grateful when I do these things and by not stressing about WHAT hasn't been done. If I take notice I haven't done something like danced in a while I will set the intention in my mind that I would like to go dancing soon.

Decide WHO You want to spend time with

I am very blessed and have many friends, family and people I have networked with that I would LOVE to spend time with. Truth is I don't get to physically see 80% of the people I would love to regularly due to location but I try my best to keep in touch. I make sure when I am spending time with a loved one I am spending conscious time with them. My mom, my husband, my kids and my good friend Angela are people I never go a few days without spending significant time with.

All of these people are inspirational to me and I love deeply. When you spend time with loved ones are you sitting in front of the TV with them or are you emotionally connecting? Are you consciously interacting and exchanging thoughts and feelings or are you going through the motions and waiting to speak? Interaction with positive people in your life is priceless. One never knows what the next day will bring. When you are with someone — be with them and feel the connection you share. Even if you spend every night with your spouse - if you are spending it in front of the TV and not communicating it can leave you feeling disconnected and unbalanced in your relationship. Conscious communication time is crucial for successful healthy relationships.

I use this philosophy whether I am answering an email or looking into someone's eyes while speaking with them. Give the other person your full attention while interacting. Stop that ego from interfering and really appreciate every interaction in your life. This way you both get the maximum experience from interacting and you can learn along the way. I love Wayne Dyer's philosophy that he looks at every person he interacts with as someone he is going to learn something from... when you start to look at people like that you can't help being filled with love and anticipation that something great will come from that interaction. Whether it is a smile to a stranger or your undivided attention

when talking to a loved one — complete consciousness during the interaction will help you feel balanced instead of feeling a lack of emotional connectivity.

Nourish Your Body, Mind and Soul

I feel **part** of the reason I had my diseases was my body's way of saying "Hey! Wake up! Time to put yourself first — oh... you won't okay — if you're sick you'll HAVE to put yourself first!" As far back as I remember I was always described as "sweet" and "kind". My friend's came to me for support whenever things didn't go well or they needed an ear. I am VERY happy to be that person as I truly love helping others but it got so bad I was somewhere down near 10th on my list of people to tend to. I feel life is about growing and learning and making a difference in other people's lives. I feel in order to do that you NEED to make sure you are in top shape physically and emotionally.

A question asked of me put this in crystal clear light... If a boat was sinking and you and your husband and kids were all possibly going to drown — who would you rescue? My first thought? Everyone else but myself! The response? How are you going to rescue ANYONE else if you don't make sure you are safe first? "A-Ha — I GOT it!". If I am worn down and exhausted from tending to everyone else I will have nothing to offer ANYBODY.

I now KNOW it is important for me to nourish my mind with learning — luckily I can do this as part of my "job description". I need alone time to meditate or walk and just "be"... yes, I will let my mind run rampant for a while but am sure to reign it in after a while and also just take some deep cleansing breaths. The alone time is good for my soul and good for me to connect with who I am deep inside rather than my roles of mom, wife, etc.... I need to nourish my body with exercise, water and good food and to be cognizant while doing this so my physical self appreciates it as well as my emotional self. By being kind to myself I am ensuring I am physically and emotionally as healthy as possible so I CAN help others when needed and have the energy to do it.

To have the energy to give out you need to be conscious about where your energy is going and make sure you set aside time to ensure your wellness, health and happiness. I know as a mom of two young children I was very apt to say "I have no time to care for

myself” but this is just making it so. There IS time if you prioritize and make sure YOU have the energy needed to take care of yourself first –THEN you will have the energy to offer other people. A good night’s sleep, the correct food, 5 minutes alone of meditation time, doing things you love — all of these will contribute to you having energy for yourself as well as for others. Having energy I feel is key to being balanced and knowing you can tackle whatever needs to be done.

Do What You Love (Work)

When you work using your strengths not only are you nourishing your own soul but you are bringing a great gift to the world. I love learning about personal development, spirituality, the mind/body connection and healing. I love writing. I love networking and being social with people. I LOVE the internet. It is because of these passions that blogging and coaching are natural choices for me. Sometimes you have to “think outside the box” a bit to find out HOW you can make money doing what you love. There are many great posts I have found on this topic and here are a few to look at:

[“A Tested Guide to Transcending Your Fears and Finally Living Your Life’s Purpose”](#) by Albert at [The Urban Monk](#).

Tom Volkar’s whole blog [Delightful Work](#) is devoted to showing you how to do what you love. Here is a good post to start out with [“Is Your Work Delightful?”](#)

[Steve Pavlina’s “How to Discover your Life’s Purpose in About 20 Minutes”](#).

The above three posts (and websites in general) are a great way to start discovering your life’s purpose and beginning to think about HOW to grow that into what you do to make a living. I guarantee there is a WAY to do what you love and make money at it!

When I “work” I am doing what I love. There are times when I am writing where I feel like there is no thought involved.... call it what you want “being divinely guided”, “being in the zone”.... when you do what you love for a living you will have many of these

moments and WOW is it an amazing feeling. The joy I get from writing and after posting something I am proud of fills me with energy and leaves me feeling balanced and ready to tackle something else.

The “To do’s”

Housework, laundry, car check-ups, groceries, chores, paying bills — ahh wouldn't it be nice to have one day a week to JUST do this stuff? Amid all the “work” and “play” time there are the “I gottas” that come up. How do you balance all of this as well? Make lists, delegate, out-source (if possible), break into smaller tasks and try and make them as fun as possible. I am a master list maker — sometimes I joke that I need a list to keep track of which lists I have. Keeping lists helps me to remember and keep clear in my head what needs to get done as well as prioritize. For delegation — my husband and I began chore charts for our kids which helps them gain responsibility and earn money and gives us time to focus on other stuff. We sold our lawn tractor and out-sourced mowing our yard because we realized it was less expensive to do it that way. I break house cleaning into several tasks so I am not overwhelmed and feel I have to “do everything at once”. When I have buckets of laundry to contend with I will blast music that I love to get me moving and happy to have the opportunity to do it. Consciousness is very important when doing these tasks as well. If I am thinking of something else and not the task on hand it is very easy for me to get distracted and side-tracked. Staying focused and aware of what you are doing gets the job done efficiently and lets you move onto the next thing! Balance the “to-dos” in with things you love to do and people you love to see and suddenly the “to-dos” just seem like a natural SMALL part of your day.

Expect the Unexpected

As I was working on this post and wanting to get it done and posted — issues with my car came up that needed to be tended to since we have an upcoming family trip. My first reaction was sighing, “HOW will I ever finish?” and just general sadness because I LOVE when I get the opportunity to be in the flow and write steadily without interruption... this ensured I would not get that time in the next few hours. Life happens

and does not always go exactly the way you expect. If you keep this even in the back of your mind and also put in there “everything happens for a reason” you will be better able to deal with these incidents as they happen. If you huff, puff and get riled up about the day being not what you wanted or get caught up in how “things didn’t work out” you are not consciously in them moment and you are actually attracting more incidents or craziness to begin. If you consciously acknowledge that the event happened you can approach it thinking “ok — this is what is — I will deal with it, see if there is anything I can learn by this happening and KNOW that I will have the time to do what I need to do”. By saying this you are not resisting but allowing — you are consciously “Appreciating all the Moments Not Just the Good Ones”. The event may still rock you a bit but you will have still maintained balance and awareness and have not allowed the “Pain Body” (as Eckhart Tolle would call it) to take over.

If I had stayed in my initial state of being sad and resisting instead of moving to acceptance this post would not have gotten done and I would not have added this section “Expect the Unexpected” which I feel IS very important in maintaining balance. I also would have gone on my trip not knowing that my car just has a small issue that can wait and wondering if it was okay with a car packed with my kids and “stuff”. Now I have peace of mind the car will do great on the trip and I added an important part to this post — hmm I guess everything DOES happen for a reason.

Summary

So what DOES life Balance Mean to me? Being conscious: during activities I love, while interacting with people, while nourishing my mind, body and soul, while working and doing my “to dos” and when unexpected things happen **keeps** me in balance. When I get overwhelmed and start doing things unconsciously or “revert back to auto-pilot” THAT is when feelings of being unbalanced set in. When that occurs I know I need to take time to regroup, relax and possibly write a list about how to regain my balance and sense of well being.

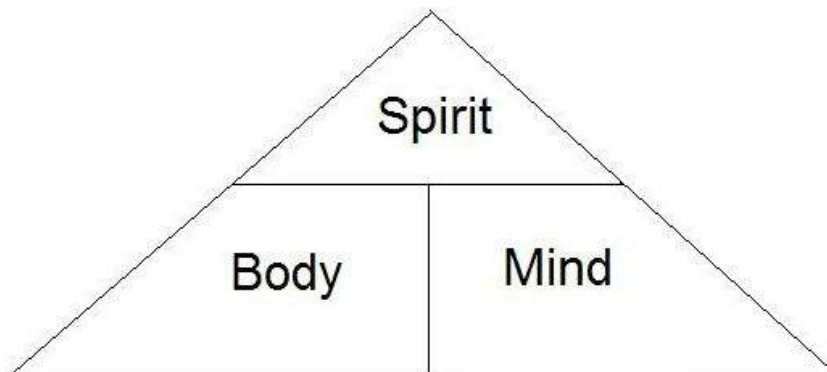
Life Balance: A Very Personal Pyramid

— By Lance, [Jungle of Life](#)

“Just as your car runs more smoothly and requires less energy to go faster and farther when the wheels are in perfect alignment, you perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, and values are in balance.” ~ Brian Tracy

How do we achieve balance in our lives? Many of us live in a life that is consumed by more activities, more demands, more commitments. The one thing that hasn't changed is the amount of time we have. A day is still 24 hours long. A minute is still sixty seconds in length.

We choose how we use that time. We choose what our focus will be.



If we think about life balance as a life balance pyramid, we'll see that the pyramid is made up of three distinct focus areas. Those areas are body, mind, and spirit.

Body is our physical body, and it's needs. Mind is our mental/psychological/emotional needs. Spirit is where we find deep meaning in our lives, the beliefs we have of a higher power, or of something greater than ourselves.

Life balance is about balancing these three areas of our lives.

And we have to decide if the activities we are doing are in alignment with what this life balance pyramid means to us individually. For instance, if you are sitting down to watch your favorite television program, is this in alignment with your life balance pyramid?

The answer is “it depends”. It is if this is what you need to give your mind a rest, or if this brings you relaxation. It is not, though, if you are doing this to avoid something else that would bring you into balance, or if this becomes excessive, leaving you little time to spend on other areas of your life.

While the base pyramid is the same for everyone, what really makes up these three areas - what’s underneath the surface - is a very personal pyramid. Determining what those things are that are underlying the main areas of body, mind, and spirit is a personal journey into “you”. Looking at life balance without looking deeply at what matters is what leads to balance that gets “out of whack”, balance that is jumbled up, balance that is backwards. So, the key then, is finding what it is that is most important in your life. And this requires a real look into ourselves, a deep introspection into who we *really* are.

Balance doesn’t mean that we are always devoting equal time to each of these areas. Balance means that we are aware of these areas, we are aware of their existence in our lives, we are giving each area the necessary devotion so that we feel our lives are balanced. Some days that will mean more emphasis on the needs of our body, other days more focus will be on our spiritual needs, and yet other days focus will be on our mind.

So, how does balance get backwards, or jumbled up? This happens when we are not focusing on the real needs of our bodies, minds, and spirits. When we focus too much of our time on activities that are not in alignment with what *our* body, mind, or spirit truly call for. And when our balance gets jumbled up, that’s when we begin to lose focus. That’s when we fall out of our element – out of what we were meant to do. We are creatures created to have a life of abundance. When our lives are not in balance, true abundance is missing.

A life of abundance and joy is possible. All it takes is balancing our body, mind, and spirit needs. Take the time to really determine what this means for you, and then live that out every day. Make each twenty four hour day of your life be in alignment with what you desire. A life of balance is awaiting you!

The See Saw: a Metaphor for Life Balance

— By Stacey Shipman, [Let it Flow](#)

There's no secret to balance. You just have to feel the waves. - Frank Herbert

When I was a little girl, I loved playing on the see-saw— me on one end, my best friend on the other. Up and down we moved, giggling playfully, hair blowing with every push off the ground. We floated up and down with laughter and with ease.

Occasionally we attempted to balance the see saw. We had to find our place in the center, face to face, feet not touching the ground. What a challenge to balance the see saw! I cannot remember a time when we succeeded in finding balance. Frustrated, we quickly gave up, happily returning to the ease of pushing each other up and down.

I see this as a wonderful metaphor for life balance for reasons that include:

Ups and Downs. Like the see saw, life comes with ups and downs – happiness/sadness, busy times/slow times. I admit, I prefer happy over sad, but truth be told both are a part of life. We have to experience and embrace the ups and the downs instead of fight them. They aren't going anywhere and often we cannot control them. While the ups and downs can be bumpy, frustrating or fast moving, I find that when I allow them to happen naturally I experience and enjoy life more. When I fight them, I'm out of balance.

It's fun for a while, but then I need a break. Although fun, we tired of the see saw and needed a break. We engaged in a different activity, and eventually found our way back to the see saw - maybe the same day, maybe the next. Much like certain aspects of my life! As much as I love my work and my family, sometimes I need to step away in order to clear my mind! The ups and downs of life can get tiresome – give yourself a (short) break and re-energize. Take a vacation day, get out of the house, go to that yoga class - do something different to refresh your body and your mind.

Let it flow. Trying to find balance on the see saw felt forced and frustrating, resulting in a failed attempt at balance. Gently gliding up and down was so much easier and more fun! In our lives we try so desperately to find balance, to gain control. In my experience this need for control creates more tension, stress and imbalance. When I allow myself to simply “let it flow” I am more at ease and fluid with my thoughts and actions. My body is relaxed. My mind is calm. I’m making appropriate choices. Let go of control and let it flow.

The Bottom line. For me, balance is allowing the ebb and flow of life to happen naturally. I cannot control the ups and downs, but I can control my choices. Tuning in to my physical, emotional and spiritual needs, rather than focusing on time spent on certain activities, provides me the insight I need to make appropriate choices. When I make choices that align with my goals and values, I am in balance. Some days I work more than I play. But as long as that work is part of my overall plan, I am happy with that decision. I am in balance. Focus less on balance and control and more on your choices, and you may find that balance is closer than you think.

Emotional Balance — By Robin Birch, [Let's Live Forever](#)

I thought I'd like to write about what emotional balance means to me. As I mentioned in an earlier post [Feelings Are There To Be Felt](#), I haven't quite got emotions "worked out". But I've needed to focus on mine lots so I reckon I should really be an expert by now. Ha.

In my younger days I was very withheld emotionally. No-one knew what I thought, or how I felt. I didn't know how I felt. At school I was very quiet and awkward, and didn't connect much. One time a group of kids made a list of everyone in the class, with a brief description, to submit to the school magazine. For me they put "Silent Brain". I misread this and thought it said "Silent Drain"—I was extremely upset! (inside) (It didn't make the magazine.)

The only time I felt love was for the cat. I remember when I had my first boyfriend for 9 months when I was 18, I didn't feel anything about him. I knew I liked him, I suppose, but I was totally out of touch with any feelings of love or affection. He quite freely expressed love for me, but I was just an emotionless blob. The poor guy! I did feel upset after he broke up with me (after first finishing my exams), so I must have felt something.

I usually had one or two "best friends" at any time, but no more boyfriends, and generally the trend of not being able to connect, and feeling isolated, strange and different continued until I found the alternative healing world just before my 33rd birthday (in 1986). Desperation drove me to it—something was not right and I knew that at the rate I was going I would NEVER be happy.

Emotions and Connection

I started having rebirthing sessions, where you use breathing to allow feelings you didn't know you had flow through you. These days the process is often called breathwork or conscious connected breathing, to avoid connotations of people trying to re-live their birth (which I didn't ever—not in an obvious way, anyway). I also started doing

workshops that removed blocks to feeling connected to others, and between the two things, I began to connect with other people really well.

I started noticing and valuing my emotions... Ah Hah! Here comes an EMOTION! I'm gonna let myself feel ANGRY! Or SAD! And I'm also going to ASSERT MYSELF, because I CAN!

This led to a phase I think many people might go through (I read in a book somewhere that they do, anyway). That is... after learning to let some (or lots of) emotions express, we may go overboard with them for a while, before coming into balance.

So at times I would stomp around being angry, or be very quick to yell at the driver who had done me wrong on the roads. From rebirthing I knew how to breathe through emotional episodes, so the emotion passes through pretty quickly and it doesn't become a wallowing session, and you are left feeling light and cleansed. I'm so grateful I have that skill up my sleeve, and I have used it lots. But I didn't always do it... sometimes I preferred to be emotional.

Astrology

Years later, well into my 40s, I found myself turning to astrology for understanding. I was living in a flat by myself, was not working much, had little money, and had become isolated again (except when I did see someone occasionally, I connected with them really well, heh heh). I should say here that I did some really good, creative, performance-type work in this period... it was more that I was socially isolated. And I was also very happy much of the time—but I knew there was more, and I had got to the point where I was feeling that being over-emotional wasn't serving me.

I came across Jan Spiller's books 'Astrology For The Soul' and 'Spiritual Astrology'. What amazing books! I discovered that being over-emotional would indeed be my issue, and they clearly described how to deal with all this in a way that made sense to me.

This totally changed things around for me—I had the books out from the library and I

kept renewing them and reading them again and again. Probably I had been so cut off from my emotions when I was young because my emotions were so strong that I was scared to feel them.

In these books, Jan discusses our past lives, and the path we are embarking on in this life to bring things into balance. For example, according to this, I had lots of past lives being at home and sheltered from the big, wide world in some way. My joy in this life would be to get out into the world, and I would be successful when I did, but my inclination might be to go with my past life pattern of staying at home. Also, people with this pattern tend to be over-emotional... “These folks can be so overrun by their emotions that they can’t think, they can’t function, and they don’t know why.”

She also describes how things can look when we have got to the point of really integrating the energies and are functioning well. Something we can look forward to when we have got things together. For my pattern it reads, in part:

You sense that your emotional fiber is actually not personal at all but rather your link with the universe. As you listen to your emotional body, and allow it to be expressed honestly and naturally, without censorship, in whatever environment you find yourself, you restore a healthy emotional balance for those around you. Thus, giving your own feelings a voice, expressing the subtle emotional undercurrents you sense going on around you, clears the emotional atmosphere for everyone involved.

Sounds good!

Today I think I’ve got the flow of emotions thing working pretty well. I can let myself feel them without being run by them. I’m still avoiding some of them though, which I know because I have been overeating over the long, cold winter we have just had here in Melbourne, with disastrous results for my waistline. But these days I know I feel love for people and myself and everything, and Frank and I freely say we love each other.

PS - for any astrology buffs out there, I have Mars in Cancer, the moon’s North Node in

the 10th house and my pre-natal lunar eclipse in Leo in the 4th.

Teeter-Totter Tribulations

— By Wendi Kelly, [Life's Little Inspirations](#)

Sticky summer nights, the smell of Cracker Jacks and the drone of engines lined up like soldiers in the Drive-in movie theater. This was the playground of my family's Saturday nights when I was a young girl growing up.

A picnic of sandwiches, chips and soda-pop preceded the moment that we children considered the highlight of the evening, which was being allowed to escape the confines of the family station wagon and fly off to play for a half hour on the playground dwarfed by the giant screen above it.

It was a simple playground, not like the amusement park replicas our children play on today. It had a metal slide, tall with a wave in the middle, which we would cleverly slide over with a slice of our mother's wax paper to make it far more slippery than any mother now would consider safe. It had a Merry-go-round, a cylinder disc with curved bars to hold on to- while some energetic child would hold on and run circles on the ground and teach us what could happen to children who didn't hold on tight in this world.

The most unique piece of equipment was the giant drum. All of the kids would cram into the drum like rats in a sewer and we would lean to one side as the drum began to move. The more we pushed, the faster it went until the force of our actions caused it to move with great speed and we all went tumbling over one and another into a screaming, laughing heap. Some of the kids would get scared and get out. Some of the kids would scream to go faster. Someone ALWAYS got hurt. It was inevitable. It was usually my sister. It was a blast.

When my crazy (fearless) sister wasn't commandeering the drum, she was likely to found swinging from the top of good old-fashioned Monkey Bars. While more sedate and cautious children, like me, were down below examining the risks, she was shimmying up the poles, one hand after the other, climbing over slower, more hesitant

children, rushing to the top. Every now and then, she would fall off. Once in awhile she would sprain or twist a body part, but she would dust herself off, find another way up and try another route, and before long there she would be again, calling for me to join her from the top...the highest Monkey in the land.

My personal favorite piece of equipment was the Teeter-Totter. I was always trying to get someone to go on the teeter-totter with me. I was fascinated by the concept of it. The fact that you couldn't go on the Teeter-totter by yourself and have it DO anything was both a marvel and an annoyance that I couldn't get over. I wasn't satisfied to continue going up and down, up and down, up and down on the thing. I wanted to play on the Teeter-Totter for the same reason I kept jumping out of trees. I wanted to do the impossible. I wanted to fly- and I wanted the teeter-totter to stay suspended in perpetual balance up in the air.

The fact that I was a complete failure at this experiment-at least for more than a mere second or two at a time- never seemed to faze my cohorts or me. We would try, repeatedly, to get just the right momentum going, just the right balance, to get those both sides to match and stay suspended in space...before one side or the other would fall and we would dissolve into a fresh fit of laughter.

The signaling glow of the lightning bugs would always end our playground follies and bring us back to the movie portion of the evening. In looking back, I can't name more than a few movies my family watched together on those mosquito nights with the scratchy little speakers pumping the sound inside our cramped car. But I do think about the lessons learned on the playground out there. The life lessons I learned by playing on "dangerous" paint-chipped equipment, which society put away long ago.

Power of Wax Paper. With a little wax paper, we can speed things up. If things are going a bit too slow or are problematic and not to our liking, we *do* have some control over the outcome. We can think it through, problem solve, come up with a solution and bring our own solution to the table (or slide) and not be a victim of a slow slide. We have the power to make change happen.

Truth about the Spin Cycle. The world is spinning FAST. It isn't going to slow down for you to catch your breath, no matter how much you wish it would. If you let go, you may spin out into orbit and get conked on the head or get a fat lip. It's your job to HOLD ON TIGHT. That doesn't mean you always have to have a vice grip on it either. You can hold on and scream your head off or you can hold on, laugh your head off, and have fun. You are still in control. But YOU CAN'T LET GO.

Teamwork Turns the Drum. As long as we all worked together to keep the giant drum turning, it didn't matter if we went fast, slow or in-between. It only mattered that we communicated and worked together. Then we could have fun. As soon as everyone only started thinking for themselves, people fell over, got trampled and got hurt.

Falling isn't Failure. My sister wasn't failing every time she fell off of the Monkey bars. She was learning a better, faster way to shimmy up to the top. Soon, there wasn't a kid from miles around who could climb up there faster than she could. The rest of us were still trying to figure things out from down below, staring up. Rarely do we learn looking up, we learn looking down at where we've been.

Life's a Teeter Totter. The bad, really sad news is that life *isn't* going to balance. Our teeter-totters, balls, balloons, marbles or anything else we try to juggle and toss up there aren't going to stay suspended in perfectly balanced animation NO MATTER HOW HARD we try, and no matter how hard we WISH, or VISUALIZE them too.

Remembering that Life is a Teeter-Totter, we realize that we aren't playing out here all alone. Many of us have trouble balancing our lives because we try to do it in a vacuum- and then are surprised when Life and people get in the way. We design the perfect balance plan and someone walks in with an important need and hand-grenades our strategy to bits. Their turn up, our turn down. We must ALSO build in times for our turn at UP. Because if we don't...it might not come. We have to bring our own wax paper and make things happen for ourselves. We can't wait for it. We need to start now. We *can*

also shoot for those rare moments of middle ground. Just don't expect them to be the norm.

Remembering that life is a teeter-totter, we realize that just because we haven't achieved the perfect Zen of life balance doesn't mean we are failing. It means we are learning. We are growing new ideas and expanding our understanding about who we are as authentic human beings in communion with other authentic human beings. Sometimes we get caught up in feeling as if we are the only ones in the spin cycle. Not true. We are all in the Drum together and we can keep it turning through better communication, compassion and teamwork. Teamwork keeps us from tripping over each other. TRUE LIFE BALANCE comes as we grow as individuals and in community with each other.

You can't ride the Teeter-Totter alone.

Finding Balance Between Creativity and Family

— By Lisa Leonard, [Lisa Leonard Online](#)

For me, the drive to create isn't optional. Ideas swim around in my mind, run through my veins and keep me up at night. I am driven to express myself through creativity. I have a creative business that requires me to work every day. But even if I didn't have a business, I know I would be focusing more creative energy on decorating, entertaining...something!

So the question isn't, 'Should I create?' but, '**How can I balance my need to create with my need to take care of my family?**' This is an ongoing process for me, one that I am sure a lot of moms can relate to. Here are some small tips on what works for me.

Take Breaks

I plan on taking lots of breaks. I get lots of work done while the boys are at school or after they are in bed, but there are times I need to work while they are home and awake. I try to gear up for interruptions. One will need juice; another will need a diaper change. I don't mind asking them to wait for a couple minutes, but their needs come first and small interruptions should be expected!

Stay On Top of Your Workload

I try to stay on top of my emails and projects. I am not always successful, but when I fall behind I find myself more stressed. It is worth it for me to stay up half an hour later and finish my to-do list for the day.

Be Realistic

Speaking of to-do lists, I try to keep mine realistic. I have begun to realize that the day only holds 24 hours (shocking, I know!) and only so much can be accomplished. That's OK, there is always tomorrow and another set of tasks to be accomplished.

Make Time for Fun

I find that we often have to get out of the house to have focused fun time. Even a trip to the grocery store can be a treat! Each child gets to choose a special snack. Stickers and balloons wait at the check stand. It's time to focus on the boys and talk with them. Of course, we also do kid things like a trip to the park, pumpkin patch or a play date with friends. We make time for fun every day.

Get Help

I remember clearly the day when I realized I was in over my head. I had a meltdown and felt completely overwhelmed. It was a turning point for us as a family. It made sense to hire someone to help with packing and shipping. I was spending hours every week doing a task that I could have someone else do. This freed me up to have more time with my family and more creative energy to put into the business.

Don't Wish the Time Away

Our kids are only young once... **Soak up the days and enjoy them.** I try to treasure our moments together and, as much as I can, I let them be a part of my work.

How do *you* find balance between creativity and family?

Life Balance and Stress — By Rob McPhillips, [Life Without Conflict](#)

Every now and then I start to read a book or go looking around the web to see what other people are writing about. When I do this I often start a rant and I have a post or two pretty much written.

Anyway while I was looking about I came across a [post about Life Balance](#). It turned out that it was a series of different people sharing their views on leading a balanced Life.

Now this is a topic that I have long held strong views on. Many people feel they need life balance to reduce stress. So I thought I'd join in and share my opinion.

Back a few years ago I looked into Coaching and lurked in a few online Communities.

One of the things that I disliked about that field was the lack of original thought. They were always banging on about being noticed and respected as a profession. They wanted to be respected to overcome their own doubts and validate their work. They had this new idea that could be developed in a hundred different ways and instead they wanted to be taught the 'one right way'.

One of the ways this was exhibited was that obviously in their training they were taught something called the wheel of life.

You might have come across it. Basically they divide life up into compartments, work, family, health etc and rate each area. The idea is that if you're 3 in finances and a 9 in relationships you need to focus on improving your financial situation.

You can see the logic in it, can't you?

In some ways it's a great tool to quickly scan your life. But problems always come when people elevate tools, technology, processes and organizations to a higher status than people. Life is about people. The rest of it only exists to serve people.

I agree that balance is essential. In life we need to exert ourselves and we need to relax. We need to succeed and we need to fail. We need to inhale and we need to exhale. There is a yin and a yang. A rhythm to life, just as there is a rhythm to walking.

But the problem comes from the assumption that we understand the technical details of all the aspects you need in your life.

I can't be certain, but I'm pretty sure Jesus never sat down with a wheel of life despairing the imbalance between what he lived and what someone else said should be in his life. You can just imagine him gathering the Disciples together and saying;

'Listen, I think we've overdone it a bit on the God's plan thing. All well and good, but we need a few women and children to bring us into balance. And we need to get ourselves some hobbies. Maybe go bowling.'

I shouldn't think Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree regretting his broken marriage and lack of finances. Yet he did come to balance.

First he rejected his privileged upbringing and took up extreme poverty. But he realized that you don't get spiritual wealth, just because you reject material wealth. He came to realize that the middle way, balance was the path to enlightenment.

You see balance is essential to life. Just as walking is a feat of balance.

But you don't get to walk with perfect balance by researching books and trying to put 60% balance on your right foot, then shifting 15% this way, do you?

You learned to walk by feeling your way into balance. Gradually you became aware of your centre of gravity without even realizing what it was. Just an internal sense that you needed to shift weight to one side.

People with great balance, like Sports stars have a refined awareness of their centre of gravity. They know when they're out of balance before the effects show up in their actions. So they correct it quickly before it harms them.

When you actually analyze walking, as some people have, it's really controlled falling. 90% of the time you are out of control. But what stops you falling is the ability to

quickly recover and bring yourself back into balance. And that's true of every natural occurrence. Nothing living is ever perfectly controlled.

Life is chaos. Just as it seems we're about to fall, about to destroy the planet, about to go into financial meltdown we find our centre of gravity and steer ourselves back to safety.

You cannot ever eliminate stress, but you can get so good at dealing with stress that it never grips you enough to harm you.

We live for the thrill of living, not for the safety and security and long slow death of technical perfection. We are Artists of living a rollercoaster Life. We only want balance when we have gotten too far out of whack and we hurt.

So let's bring this ramble to a conclusion that makes some sense to someone who feels that they need balance.

The balance that you seek is not one of technical details or mathematical equations.

The balance comes from an inner awareness, an inner guidance that leads you to the joy and bliss that we all seek to experience.

Balance is something that we need, but the wheel of life approach looks at it from a perspective that will not bring it. It is a slightly more complex step from the idea that money brings happiness. Instead adding in other elements such as relationships, career and health.

The truth is no possession or quality will bring you happiness. You can only be happy, by being you.

And so the more fully you, you are, the more you will express that in every area of your life.

You see, you are the central theme, the grand idea that connects all the compartments of your life together. Each of us is designed uniquely. Some don't have any need for family. Others have little need for work. Or for money. Or whatever. Just find your

emotional centre of gravity and use your awareness to continually bring it back into balance.

Awakening To a Balance Life — By Davina, [Loving Pulse](#)

While I waited for my senses to surrender to sleep, I listened to the wind whispering through the trees outside my window.

I felt connected. Complete. I drifted off to sleep while other senses were awakened.

The wind was the last thing I remembered before waking from a dream. In this dream I was dressed in army fatigues and being held prisoner. I was not alone and eventually helped the other person to escape.

I awoke from the dream slowly, still looking through the eyes of that person who had remained behind. Interestingly that person no longer felt like a prisoner.

I had this dream while preparing to write this article and feeling the frustration of writer's block. How could I write about living a balanced life when I was struggling with it myself? Nothing I wrote felt right. I had become so attached to the outcome of the article I wasn't letting the creativity flow. I was disconnected. What was interesting about this dream was my interpretation. The person who had been set free was my creative muse.

My thoughts returned to the connection I had felt while listening to the wind. I knew there was an answer there. Memories of other times I felt connected swam through my mind and I relaxed into knowing what living a balanced life meant to me.

Seeing a shooting star. Catching a snowflake. Watching the sunrise on a misty morning. Admiring a rainbow. Smelling the new cherry blossoms in springtime.

These are things that fill me up. They are without expectation. And because I am not attached to the outcome I can be more fully in the moment. Nature does that for me. It wakes me up. It inspires that feeling of being connected. When I feel connected I also feel balanced.

We have become separated from the natural flow of life in an effort to control it. Calendars and schedules attempt to balance our daily activities, yet we still run in circles seemingly getting nowhere. We have created this world and yet it controls us.

We are out of rhythm and less flexible because we depend on these schedules to tell us where to be and when.

Life has a schedule of its own and it unfolds as we are trying to fold it up, throw it into a briefcase and run for the next subway train. We don't even see where we're running because subconsciously we've already reached our destination.

Because we have become so disconnected with our natural rhythm we feel unfulfilled. This brings an unconscious desire to fill a void. And fill it we do – with things. But it's never enough is it?

Trouble is, the more things we collect the more complicated our lives become and the more out of control we feel. It is a never-ending cycle.

You can stop the cycle. Here are five suggestions.

1. Feel your connection: Balance is achieved through connection. What are you doing when you feel connected? See it in your mind and remember how it feels. When you feel out of control, revisiting this feeling can stop you from living ahead of yourself. It brings you back into the moment. When you are in the moment you are less likely to be distracted.

2. Honour your values: When you know what your ultimate goal is (the big picture), hold it in your intent but don't become attached to it. Working with values gives a person the ability to make more powerful and appropriate choices about how to reach their goal.

Finding rhythm in attaining a goal comes through knowing that each step is connected to the other; like a dance. They're not separate actions to be scheduled in a specific order. They naturally support and feed each other with little effort. One clue that you are not honouring your values is through your internal dialogue. See #3.

3. Choose your dialogue: Be aware of how you talk and think. What words are you choosing? When you say, "I should" or "I have to" you are putting pressure on yourself. Or, perhaps what you are trying to accomplish is not of value to you and you shouldn't

waste your time on it. If it is important, choose more empowering words such as “I want to” or “I will”. They’re less likely to cause resistance to action.

4. Practice meditation: Simply put, meditation encourages clarity. We aren’t scattered because there are too many distractions. It’s because we are not focused that we notice the distractions. When a person is not focused they are more vulnerable to outside influences. Responding to people and circumstances takes a back seat, while reacting takes the front.

5. Focus on fulfillment: Fulfillment surrenders to balance. As I mentioned earlier, when we are not feeling fulfilled we unconsciously try to fill a void with things we believe will fill us up. When a life is built on false beliefs any perceived balance is fragile and short-lived. I’ve had days where my life seems as organized as it can be, but find myself feeling restless. Something is missing. Things appear to be balanced, but I’m not fulfilled.

One thing to remember. If you’ve ever tried to stand on one leg you’ve noticed that balance fluctuates. That means if you aren’t flexible you’ll end up a prisoner of your own controlled efforts.

Wake up to your senses and they will lead you to the fulfillment that designs a balanced life.

Work. Life. It's All About Living — By Maria Gajewski, [Never The Same River Twice](#)

Work life balance is one of the most overused phrases of the last 10 years. And what good has all the talk done you?

If you're like most people, your 9-5 turns into a 9-9 more often than not. You're bringing work home on the weekends, missing time with your children, and haven't practiced your hobby in years. Your waistline is expanding while your sense of well-being is shrinking.

When Stacy at [Create a Balance](#) announced the [Life Balance Group Writing Project](#), I was initially a little put off. I mean, honestly, the whole work life balance thing has been talked (and written) about to death. However, I kept thinking about the idea and realized why I'm so frustrated with the whole subject. I think most people are approaching the idea all wrong...

What is Work?

Maybe my entire problem with the concept of work life balance is one of definition. I decided to turn to Google to help me find a definition that resonated with me. Here is just a small sampling of what I found.

- Exert oneself by doing mental or physical work for a purpose or out of necessity
- Have an effect or outcome; often the one desired or expected
- Proceed towards a goal or along a path or through an activity
- Employment: the occupation for which you are paid

These are all functional definitions of the word “work”, but none of them really got at the heart of what I think of when I see that word. Here’s my definition:

Work = All the Stuff You (Think You) Have to Do, But Don’t Want to Do

The Status Quo is Broken

Most people (including me) spend a lot of time doing things that they don’t want to do. We go to jobs that may be “okay” but we aren’t passionate about. We go to parties that we don’t enjoy, talk to people that we don’t like, shop for clothes that we don’t want to wear, and clean things that we don’t want to use. Doing all of these things leaves precious little time for the fun stuff that may look like work to someone else (knitting - I just don’t get it), but that we enjoy so much we do it for free.

The current status quo in the United States and other Western countries (but not France, God bless ‘em!) is to do lots of work and to feel good about yourself because of it. Personally, I blame the Puritans for this and all other social ills currently afflicting the U.S., but the source of the problem isn’t important. What matters is that we - the intelligent, tired, and bored people of the world - find ways to circumvent this system and actually have time to enjoy our own lives. If others want to keep on working away, I certainly won’t try to stop them!

How to Work Less and Have More Life

Now that we’ve defined the problem, the question becomes one of execution. Given that we all have certain constraints (like the need to eat on a daily basis), we can’t just walk away from all work. But, as far as I can tell, the only way to increase your work life balance is to spend less time working (doing things you don’t like) and more time living (enjoying yourself and your friends/family). So, right now, I want you to **pull out a piece of paper** and draw a line down the middle of it. On one side, make a list of all the things that you do that you consider work. On the other side, make a list of all the things that you consider life.

*Just so we're clear, for the purposes of this exercise **work is always bad and life is always good**. I know that reality isn't all neat like this, but humor me for a minute.*

Because time is a non-renewable resource, if you want to do more of one thing you have to stop doing so much of another. That means you're going to have to find time you can shift from the work column over to the life column. I've been actively engaged in this process for a couple of years now, and here are a few lessons I've learned the hard way, so that you don't have to.

1. **Quit Stuff.** I know this is hard and often frowned upon, but you really can quit obligations that are taking away your time and attention from things that you enjoy. Resign from the PTA board, stop showing up for that yoga class that gives you a backache, just say "No" to dinner parties. Quit anything that makes you say "Ugh," when you think about going.
2. **Don't Go Above and Beyond.** Don't tell your boss I said this, but it rarely pays to be a top tier employee. Let's say that your employer ties raises to performance. If you're average you get a 2% raise and if you're exceptional you get 5%. If you make \$50,000 per year, being exceptional earns you \$1500 (before taxes) more than your average colleague. How many additional hours would you need to work to get that \$1500? If it's just 15 minutes per day (and it's probably a lot more than that!), you are working 60 hours per year - more than 1 extra week - for that money. Is it worth it?
3. **Find Someone Else to Do Your Work.** Not all work activities are job related. We all have tasks that are necessary to maintain life (most of these can be labeled "chores") but aren't any fun. The good news is, other people do these things in exchange for money or some other item of value. So if you love to mow your lawn, but HATE scrubbing the bathtub, hire a cleaner. (I've done this myself.) I know that you have lots of reasons to avoid doing this. You think it's expensive (it's cheaper than your fancy car payment). You'll feel guilty (yep, but you'll get over it). Your mother will find out (she will, and she'll get over it too). Trust me, the cost is well

worth the time it buys you. If all else fails, make your kids help with the cleaning.

4. **Sign Up and Pay Money.** If you really want to start an activity that falls in the life column, the surest way to get going is to sign yourself up for something that costs money. This can be a class, contest, race, trip, or anything with a set deadline. Human psychology will force you get the most out of your investment and you'll find ways to do the three tips above. The best part is, you'll have fun doing it.

I know that we're all struggling to live more balanced lives.

It's Never Too Late — By Prem Rao, [People at Work & Play](#)

I wonder if you noticed that evenings at an executive retreat tend to lend themselves to nostalgia. The day's work is done and as you sit and yarn, sooner or later someone in the group speaks of old times. This happens with unfailing regularity. You hear happy stories and sad ones- from the past. They could cover virtually anything- a childhood memory, an opportunity gone by, the amazingly low costs of those days or simply about things that you wish you had done - but couldn't , or more often than not, didn't.

A constant theme I hear is that we wish we could have spent more time with the family. Spent more time with our children when they were growing up -and perhaps needed us the most. And in pursuing interests which we can't do now- for reasons of health or affordability. Some comments that one hears quite frequently:-

“I had such wonderful opportunities to play squash -but didn't. It's forbiddingly expensive now”.

“We lived in the mountains when I was much younger. I kept putting off climbing those peaks. Now they are beyond me”

” I could have learnt that years ago but was busy with other things. I now find it almost impossible to understand. Things have changed so much”.

“Watching other's children grow reminds me of my own kids. I didn't have much time for them then. I have all the time now, but they are no longer around”

The bad news is that all of us have something to repent about. The good news is that it's never too late to repent. You might not be able to do one thing that you missed- but you could quite easily immerse yourself in another which gives you that much joy- provided you give that activity the priority, it deserves.

I guess as you grow older things take on differing degrees of importance. In youth, you would seldom care about your health. With the major focus on work, it was inevitable

that you pretty much took good health for granted. Something that you cannot afford to do as you get older. Likewise, for the younger person with less family responsibilities, the ability to take more risks (be it for a career change or moving to a different environment altogether) is much higher than an older person who has more responsibilities - with less time on his side.

At the end of the day, we live life based on the choices we make and the priorities we assign. There is hope for us yet. Dennis Waitely, whom I admire as a writer, sums it up so well:

” Time is an equal opportunity employer. Each human being has exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Rich people can’t buy more hours. Scientists can’t invent new minutes. And you can’t save time to spend it on another day. Even so, time is amazingly fair and forgiving. No matter how much time you have wasted in the past, you still have an entire tomorrow”.

People who live truly fulfilling lives make time for everything that is meaningful to them. This includes work, leisure, health and family. A balanced lifestyle is not based on a mathematical equation. What matters is not the amount of - but the quality of - time you spend on all that’s important to you.

Reach for Life Balance — By BC Doan, [Reach Beyond Limits](#)

I have always tried to find ways to balance my life, whether it is work, home, or my own responsibilities. We all have so many roles to fill, from being a parent, a daughter/son, a sister/brother, a friend, to being an employee.

Each role we play has its own hiccups. We learn to weave out the good and the bad, and then somehow try to find balance in order for us to be able to live with.

So What is Life Balance?

This is a tough question! I know what I want, and I know what works for me, but to give it a definition, I have to dig deeper. For me, life is balance when gives and takes, yes and no, happiness and sadness, meet somewhere close to the middle.

Why Do You Need Life Balance?

I need life balance to be a better person. Without balance, life would be a total chaos in all aspects of my human being. My emotional will be drained. My physical will be vulnerable to illness. My mental stage will be depleted.

How I Practice Life Balance

I practice life balance by paying attention to my own being, listen to what my body tells me, and do something that I love. For example, I give all my energy in taking care of my children, and when that energy runs low, I give myself permission to soak in a hot bath, without guilt. When my body is tired, I take ten minutes for a short nap.

What I Incorporate Into Life Balance?

- Love oneself
- Love others
- Accepting life as is
- Having faith
- Do one thing that I like every day
- Eating healthy foods
- Learn something new every day
- Reach beyond limitations
- Take time to count my blessings
- Develop appreciation for people and things around me

What are the Characteristics of Someone Practicing the Art of Life Balance?

- Calmness
- Easy going with a touch of happiness
- See the difference between big problem, and small one
- Accepting one's own situation, and find contentment from it
- Flexible in dealing with the unexpected
- Take life as it is, and try to make it better

The Essential Components of Life Balance

The essential components of life balance include: prioritize, discipline, scheduling, self-forgiving, contentment, happiness, giving yourself a pat on the back, be gentle with inner critic, and have compassion.

What Does Life Balance Mean to You?

Having life balance prevents me from burning out, preserve the person that I am, and enable me to embrace all living things around me. I can give myself freely, but also be selfish when needed too.

This is what life balance means to me! It is not perfect, but I am working on it every day. Life is constantly changing, even from day to day; therefore, I must also learn to go with the changes rather than against them.

What Is Life Balance & Is It Achievable For Everyone?

— By Kelly Rigby, [She-Power](#)

When **Stacey** of [Create a Balance](#) posted about her **life balance group writing project**, my first thought was “great idea, shame I know absolutely nothing about life balance.”

I said as much to Stacey, but she convinced me to try and put my own spin on the topic, particularly since I struggle so much with it. And what a struggle it's been. In truth, until very, very recently, I would have told you I have no idea what life balance is.

None. I'm not exaggerating.

For this reason I decided to consult a book by [Paul Wilson](#), who is often cited as the **Guru of Calm**. In **Perfect Balance: Create Time and Space for All Parts of Your Life**, Paul defines **PERFECT BALANCE** as

The “feeling of everything being just right and making sense, when you perform at your best and most productive without stress or distraction, when you are motivated and inspired, when you can relax and enjoy the company of others, when you have all the time in the world...”

I read that and my first thought is, “Does anyone feel this way?” Because I certainly never have.

For as long as I can remember I have been one of those people who throws herself from one extreme to the other. When I was younger it was 12 hour days as a product manager balanced with boozing, popping pills and snorting coke until I didn't know whether I was waking up or going to bed.

Then I spent years where I achieved some real meaning in my life, but there was still no balance. I was either: working, studying and saving; or taking off backpacking for 5-6

months. This usually involved lying around on beaches, drinking beer, meeting new friends and exploring temples and markets. After recharging my batteries, I'd inevitably return home and start the treadmill all over again.

I guess there is a kind of balance in this; a **SEE-SAW EFFECT**. But when I was in work mode my most common feeling was exhaustion, which is hardly a sustainable state.

Trying To Be The Perfect Mother Reduced My Life Balance To An All-Time Low

At 32, after years of this tiring, but at times exhilarating SEE-SAW, I embarked on what would become the most unbalanced phase of my life. **Motherhood**. For the first time I went from being a die-hard independent; a woman who had been completely self-driven for 14 years, to a woman who gave up everything to raise my son.

Yes, EVERYTHING. All exercise, self care, my job, my own money, my LIFE outside of Bunny.

I was so determined to be the PERFECT MOTHER. To get everything "right". To be there for every second of my son's life. To have him know he was my top priority; the one person he could always count on.

To me, being a good mother meant sacrifice. Lots and lots of sacrifice.

If you're thinking there's a happy ending here and I'm going to deliver a bullet point list of how I turned my life around in 10 easy steps, well you're going to be disappointed. I do see the error of my ways and I now understand that HAPPY MOMMY = HAPPY CHILD. But to say, I've got it all worked out, that would be overly optimistic.

Is Life Balance Achievable?

This [group writing project](#) has come at an interesting time because I have been consumed in recent months with the need to balance my responsibilities to others with my responsibilities to myself.

It has been an at times heart wrenching struggle as I have questioned whether I am even cut out for motherhood. I have so many personal ambitions and a free spirit that

does not like to be confined. How do I reconcile this with my current responsibilities and the needs of the family I adore?

I have asked myself many times what I really want out of life and so far my **ideal picture of life balance** involves:

- ***My time being evenly split between work/projects that are creatively fulfilling and spending quality time with my child***
 - ***Having satisfying relationships while also taking quiet time to continue with my personal development and spiritual studies, or just do nothing and recharge***
 - ***To have some financial security balanced with a high degree of freedom and a respect for my adventurous spirit***
 - ***To live mostly in a state of inner peace***
 - ***To spend more time in the present and enjoying my physicality and less time in my head***
-

When I read those words, I can't help but think I'm searching for nirvana. Doesn't everyone want this kind of life, and realistically how many of us are going to get it? I have considered the notion that maybe the SEE-SAW is the best I can hope for. Maybe I'm just built this way - a woman of extremes.

But then I started reading **Perfect Balance: Create Time and Space for All Parts of Your Life** and two of Paul Wilson's quotes leaped out at me:

“Everything you need for a perfectly balanced life you already have. There's nothing new you need, there's nothing you have to give up. All you have to do is rediscover and refocus the strengths you have now.”

“Your life will be as balanced as you make up your mind for it to be.”

Aha - LIGHT BULB MOMENT. In an instant I understood where I have been going wrong.

Achieving life balance is about making MORE than just physical changes

Too often people associate life balance with a more productive combination of work, family, spiritual and social needs. They caught up in thinking about the physical changes needed to improve their lives. But **what about the internal changes?**

Life Balance is MORE than Productivity and Goal Setting and “Doing What You Love”

Meaningful life balance starts with CHOICES. With seeing that you are not a victim of circumstance. You choose how to spend your time, so before you start moving the pieces of your life, ask yourself:

- **What choices are you currently making? Where are your energies currently focused?**
- **Are these choices in line with your values and priorities?**
- **Where do you WANT to spend your time and focus your energies?**
- **Can you choose to look at your life differently, see all that’s right and feel good about it NOW?**

I’m still moving these ideas around in my head, but straight away I can see that **my attitude to my life is my biggest problem.** I tend to wish I had the freedom of someone who doesn’t have children and I get stuck on the restrictions that come with motherhood. I want to be able to travel and concentrate on my writing like I could “in the good old days”.

But what's the point of thinking this way? I AM a mother. I AM a wife. I'm GLAD I made BOTH these choices, and I have never regretted them. I envy aspects of my husband's career driven life, but when it comes down to it, I wouldn't swap with him and miss out on the bond I have with Bunny. And if I could go back and do my life over, I wouldn't choose to be anywhere different now.

So, starting today I'm going to get real about my life. I am a mother of a young son and he needs me. I'm happy he needs me. This means some of my personal goals will have to take a backseat sometimes, and life will flow a lot smoother if I don't expend energy resisting that.

I guess the lesson is that life balance is an ever changing puzzle. Priorities today will not necessarily be the same a year from now, so I should try going with the flow more and judging myself less. I can only do the best that I can, and for once maybe I should tell myself that **my best is good enough**.

How successful do you think you are with life balance? Are you happy with your choices? If not - is it your priorities that need to change or your attitude?

Live Simple To Create Balance In Your Life

— By Jack Rugile, [Simple Sapien](#)

Balance is an essential component of happiness. When all aspects of your life are in harmony, it puts your mind, body, and spirit on an equal level. The definition of balance will be completely different from person to person. It is up to you to find the balance that is right for you. However, living simple will always help you create balance in your life.

Many of us have lives that are like a person attempting to walk a tight rope for the first time. We buckle. We wobble. We try to stay on by flailing our arms. But eventually, no matter how hard we try, we fall off the edge.

Some of us will give up. Some of us will get back on the tight rope and try again. Some of us will find a whole new way to balance. Those of us who find a new way to balance our like people riding bicycles. The balance is tricky at first, but once you get some speed and gain momentum, **it is completely natural to stay in balance**. Living a simple life is like riding that bicycle. It does not guarantee that we won't ever fall off, but it greatly increases our chances of staying in balance.

Finding balance in your life can be a difficult thing. It most certainly will not happen overnight. There will be many hours of contemplation, reflection, imagination, frustration, and inspiration involved in the process. And even if you do find balance in your life, that balance may morph and change as your life changes. Things that are important to you now may mean nothing to you five years from now. Achieving balance in your life will be an ever changing experience.

Complications in your life make finding balance a much more difficult task. That is why I suggest living a simple life to help you create balance in your life. **The less things you have to deal with in life, the better**. Balancing five stones on top of each other is much easier than balancing thirty stones. The more we can focus on individual aspects of our lives, the better. When we spread ourselves too thin, our balance is bound to be thrown off.

Ways To Create Balance By Living Simple

- **Forget multi-tasking, single-task instead** - By putting your full focus and energy on one specific task at a time, your best work is achieved. Put quality before quantity. Always strive for excellence in all that you do. Do few things, but do them well.
- **Spend more time with friends and family** - Never forget your loved ones. They are the ones that will catch you when you are about to fall. They are the ones who will guide you when you are lost. They are the ones that will support you when you are feeling weak. Cherish them and provide the same support for them. Always let the people who are important in your life know how much they mean to you. It can never be said too much.
- **Eat healthy** - In the words of Count Rugen from The Princess Bride: *"If you haven't got your health, then you haven't got anything."* Implementing a simple, healthy diet into your life will not only make you feel better and more balanced, but it will also be cheaper. Eating fast food or prepackaged food not only costs more, but has less nutritional value. Don't forget to enjoy and savor what you eat.
- **Exercise regularly** - The quote above can be applied to this one as well. Exercise is needed to balance out the time that you are inactive. Combine this with a healthy diet and your body will be balanced physically.
- **Spend less than what you make** - This simple principle is easy to understand, but can be difficult to live by. If you are in mounds of debt, that is obviously going to disrupt the balance in your life. By spending less than what you make, you can slowly get out of debt and stay out of debt.

- **Integrate your passions with your career** - Having a job that you are passionate is so important in achieving balance. A good chunk of everyone's life will be spent at work. If there is no meaning or passion behind your job, it will have a negative affect on you. Following your passion in your career might not yield you as much money, but it will bring you much more happiness and balance. The benefit of living a simple life is that you don't need that much money to sustain yourself anyway, so money should not be a problem.
- **Rid yourself of material possessions** - Having too much stuff can make you feel trapped or weighed down. Give away or sell the things that you never use anymore. When you go shopping, ask yourself: "Do I really need this?"
- **Write in a journal or blog** - If you are anything like me, then you have ideas and thoughts swirling throughout your brain all day. I forget things and lose track of things so easily. Writing your thoughts and ideas down helps you remember them and make sense out of them. It helps you see the big picture in your life. It can provide insight as to what areas of your life need work and what areas are going smoothly.
- **Learn from others** - Observe your friends and family. Which ones are successful, happy, and seem to live a quality life? What is differentiates their lives from yours? What habits do they have? Don't be afraid to talk to them and ask them questions about how they live their life. Finding balance should never have to be a lonely task.

There are many other ways to bring balance to your life by living simple. **What are some ways that living simple has increased balance in your life? What is your definition of balance?**

Career and Life Balance — By Stefanie Zizzo, [Stefanie Zizzo Career & Life Coach](#)

Yesterday I was sitting on the back deck at [Aqueduct Conference Center](#) in Chapel Hill. If you have ever been there, you know how beautiful and serene the view is from that spot. You see a large expanse of grass, an abundance of trees in the distance and a plethora of bushes with large purple flowers buzzing with bees right in front of me.

The reason I was there was that I had been invited to deliver a seminar on Personal and Professional Life Balance to graduate students from NC State. My talk focused on the theme of Choice and the role it plays in creating balance in our lives. Choice of *what* we do, *how* we do it, *when and where* we do it, *who* we are when we are doing it and the type of *support* we choose.

In preparation for this presentation, the students were asked to complete a [Signature Strengths Questionnaire](#) (you can try it too, it's free) that measures what matters most to each of us. Knowing what matters most is a critical component in making the best choices. I completed it as well. One of my top 5 was “appreciation of beauty and excellence”.

So yesterday, when finished for the day, instead of rushing off to my next appointment, I decided to spend a few moments basking in the beauty on the back deck, I then chose to take the longer but more beautiful route home on the backroads near Jordan Lake rather than the interstate.

Those choices - taking those few moments of quiet and beauty were rejuvenating and truly balanced my day!

Following the Path...One Step at a Time — By Jean, [Stress to Power](#)

Our lives are frittered away in details. Simplify. Simplify.
—Henry David Thoreau

People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality....
—Joseph Campbell in *The Power Myth*

I've always had a lot of inner drive, but I've never been achievement oriented...except when I was a kid, when I wanted to do well in school. I hear a lot these days about how hectic life can be as we try to juggle all the demands makes of us. I've never had that problem as an adult. I've always agreed with Thoreau: "Simplify. Simplify."

Some people seem to think that would mean accepting an impoverished life. On the contrary. It means having the time and attention to appreciate what we have, to be able to do what's truly important to us. (See [Living Every, Every Minute](#).) For me it sometimes meant doing things that society doesn't admire, like taking ten years out to raise a child...doing some volunteering, working together (including my husband) on family projects and just "hanging out" and enjoying my daughter while she was still young.

At other times it meant doing things that are more officially exciting and honored by our culture...see [Building a Solid Foundation](#) and [Making Hay While the Sun Shines](#). What worked for me was to enjoy each period of my life as it came and not try to do everything at once.

I learned about the joy of simplifying when I was in grammar school. My sister and I were taking dancing lessons, and sometime in early December we had a recital. I don't remember much about it, except that because it was so close to Christmas the organizers treated us by allowing us to go through a line with a long table full of toys. We could choose anything we wanted. My sister and I chose carefully and each decided we wanted one of the balls. As we were leaving we saw other kids with armloads of goodies...it turns out we didn't have to choose just one thing, we could have had as much as our arms could have carried. At first we felt foolish and wanted to go back and try again, but then we decided that's not what we really wanted. We really wished the rule had been what we had assumed, that we could each pick only one thing. If we had a huge pile of toys then none of them would have been special.

No, I've never been tempted by the idea that the more we do and the more we have the happier we will be. As I've said, I do have an inner drive, so when my husband and I got back from our 15 months in Europe and traveling around the world (again see [Building a Solid Foundation](#)) it was time for me to figure out what I wanted to do next. The usual advice of envisioning your ideal future and setting goals to achieve it didn't work for me. I just wanted to live deeply and find work that I loved to do. I wanted to enjoy the process of living, and that was something I couldn't envision. I finally realized it wasn't something I could see, it was something I had to feel. **Maybe I couldn't see around the next corner, but I could tell when I was on the right path.** I still remember where I was standing when I realized that. It was another life-changing moment. I suddenly had an inner gyroscope...I was free to explore without worrying about becoming lost.

I don't always consciously know where I'm going, but my inner path is there and I can tune into it. The important thing is **taking this approach means there is no rush, there is no frustration about not moving fast enough to meet external goals. All I have to do is follow the path, one step at a time.**

Balance, in terms of juggling priorities, is seldom a problem for me now. If I find myself having conflicting priorities, I step back and simplify my life so I can focus on what's most important. It goes back to the [Traits of Stress-Hardy, Resilient People](#):

They realize that the quality of our lives depends on how we focus our energy and our attention. They try to align their thoughts and actions with their values. They know how to motivate themselves to take action.

I don't know if this approach would work for everyone. I enjoy working and don't have trouble motivating myself, assuming it's something I want to do. And because we've kept our lives simple and have always lived beneath our means, my husband and I have a lot of financial freedom. It works for us.

What About You? Is your life in balance? Are you trying to do too much? Do you need more challenges? Do you have an inner path that you're tuned into? What works for you?

The Key to Happiness and Balance is Right With You, Just Learn to Use It — By Maya, [Think Maya](#)

This is Part 3 of the Series titled “The key to happiness and balance is right with you, just learn to use it”. In [Part 1 of the series](#), I told you exactly WHY we need a framework and introduced you to the “thinkmaya framework” foundation. In this [Part 2 of the series](#), I talked about HOW we prepare ourselves to be able to apply the framework successfully. In **Part 3(here)**, I will, with the help of 3 thinkmaya readers, introduce the framework and discuss a few of its applications

Learning to use the framework

In this post I will discuss how to apply the thinkmaya framework. Three thinkmaya readers have graciously shared their situations with us. After giving an overview of each of the steps in the process I follow it with how each of the three readers would possibly apply it to their lives and their situations.

Before I start, here are the situations as shared by [Mare](#), [Lance](#) and [Stacey](#) in their own words:

- **[Mare](#)**: My issue is eating sweets. I exercise religiously Monday to Friday, cardio and weights. I’ve decided to increase the time and speed of my jogging, and I’m doing very well with that as well. However, I’m having trouble transferring the discipline that I have when it comes to exercise, to staying away from sweets.
- **[Lance](#)**: I have a job I really like, and a company I really like to work for. However...as much as I like it, I don’t love what I do. What I have fallen in love with is writing. I’m not sure if this fits what you’re looking for... The situation then is that I’m torn between doing what I love (without pay right now) or doing what I really like (with the comfort on a regular paycheck). My present region is probably in thoughts. I have been thinking about this quite a bit. I want this problem to become an opportunity to expand into work that I love. It’s difficult because I happen to really like

where I'm at currently in my life. All around, where I'm at is a good place. But I also know it could be better. The question for me becomes how do I move confidently toward whatever "better" is for me.

- **Stacey:** With everything going on in my life, my house is a clutter magnet (there is no time to clean up after everyone). I feel frustrated. I try to pick up a little every day. I tried a professional organizer (she helped but she's not a long term solution). I think I'm in region 4. I want to feel a sense of serenity from my home (not a sense of clutter and chaos). My destination is a happy core based on your framework.

Using the framework

Using the framework essentially means following some steps that will help you inch closer to your goal. The crux of the framework lies in the step where you analyze/act. Each of the steps are equally important as noted in the descriptions below.

Step1: Detach

- **Move away from the problem for sometime - mentally, physically and emotionally**
- **In order to help you do that, choose activities that are in a different space than the one you are in now.**

The way I see it, "detach" is the very first step to finding a solution to any problem/situation. **It follows from the fact that disengaging ourselves is the first and essential step towards an unbiased analysis of our situation.** It is about creating a distance and removing ourselves from the situation physically, mentally and emotionally. This is certainly not an easy task when we are "stuck" in the middle of a problem but it is entirely possible by letting our thoughts, emotions and actions help each other out. For example, if we are dealing with an emotional situation with another person and want to detach ourselves emotionally, we have to first create a physical distance from the person you are dealing with. If we are consumed by our thoughts, we cannot stop thinking by thinking more. It has to be done by choosing an activity that probably involves our emotions and actions (see activity matrix below). For how long should we detach? Depends on the intensity of your problem. Depends on how long you

take to feel ready to deal with the problem. Emotional issues are the ones that require the longest time to detach.

- **Mare:** Mare should remove all sweets (and hence temptation) from her surroundings such as her home and her office. (Remember this is not a long term solution and is not expected to work long term. This is just step 1). Removing the temptation will lessen the possibility that Mare will be upset by her actions and hence give her some space and time “away” from her problem. For an indirect approach, Mare should also make sure that she nourishes her body at regular intervals with sufficient carbs and fruits. Starving yourself of what the nutrients her body needs will push you closer to the problem by creating an intense desire to eat sweets. (If there is an emotional component that causes Mare to want sweets she should try to distance herself from that as well. For the sake of simplicity, I am assuming there is no emotional component here.)
- **Lance:** Lance has been thinking a lot about writing. Thinking a whole lot. But Lance needs to give this thinking a break knowing that a solution will come. He needs a break from his thinking so he can realign his approach. Perhaps the solution for Lance here is to get consumed with something at his work or create a new goal for himself that is not writing related. In his case it might be as simple as taking a shower or watching a movie. Whatever it takes to get ready to change gears on dealing with this situation.
- **Stacey:** Of all the three people here, it looks like Stacey is the one most in need of creating detachment. Stacey’s mind is cluttered as the result of the clutter in her home. Stacey needs to create a sanctuary for herself in order to be able to deal with her issue. A room. A desk. A corner. Some physical space away from all the clutter. She needs to create that space, go away and have fun for a day with something physically intense activity and come back mentally and emotionally refreshed.

Step 2 : Detox

- **Accept your situation. Promise cooperation.**

- **Give yourself a reality talk.**

This is where you further detach through a specific way - by “letting go”. This is where we tell ourselves, “It is okay, perfectly okay to be in this situation”. It is complete acceptance of ourselves and the other person without a second question. This is the point where we forgive everyone involved in the situation and really get ready to act on the problem. This step is critical - you cannot work with yourself if you do not accept yourself. What if we are not able to let go? What if we cannot forgive? This essentially means that we have not “detached” sufficiently from our problem. We need to go back to step 1. (None of the examples provided below involve multiple people but it should be noted that “detox” is hardest when multiple people are involved in a situation)

- **Mare:** Millions of people have a sweet tooth and millions more have dealt with it. The reality is that it is not easy to transfer the discipline of exercise to eating directly. The truth is that the motivators are what need to be transferred and the discipline will follow (easier said than done).
- **Lance:** Lance probably already knows this but it is a great situation he is in. He has 2 things in life - a thing he loves to do and a thing that brings him money. But he is also going through something a lot of people do at some point - a conflict between what they love and what brings money.
- **Stacey:** Stacey has kids and she works from home. And she works a lot. Stacey should tell herself that it is totally normal to have a cluttered home in such situations. Kids have more stuff and kids rarely help with cleanup.

Step 3 : Define

- **Set your goals.**
- **Keep them realistic. Keep them achievable**

Once you have detached yourself from the problem temporarily and accepted your situation, take a few minutes to define what you want. List both the tangible and intangibles goals here. If you are dealing with an issue regarding another person define what is most important at the end - your relationship, how you feel, how the other

person feels etc. It is important to keep the goals realistic and achievable. The goals can always be modified later but for now, take small steps.

- **Mare:** What does Mare want to achieve? Does she want to eat sweets mindfully? Does she want to eat just a couple of sweets a week? Does she want to stop eating sweets all together?
- **Lance:** Lance needs to decide what is important to him at this point. Does he want to start writing right away? Does he want to create the best possible future for himself even if it takes a couple of years?
- **Stacey:** Stacey needs to define what she means by wanting a sense of serenity. What spaces matter most to Stacey. What kind of clutter is unacceptable?

Step 4/5 : Analyze/Act

- **Use the framework picture. See where you are and where you want to be.**
- **Set a strategy for moving towards your goal.**
- **Use activities that involve the dormant member/members of your governing body in order to secretly (mostly) tease yourself into the happy core.**

The next two steps are ones that take time since this is where the real problem is attacked. These two steps will also be repeated over and over again until you are done dealing with whatever you are working on. Change always comes in small steps and so it is here as well. Analyse /act can be considered one step since they are so intricately connected to one another. When we are so caught up in a problem it is really hard to think up a solution. Moreover, just thinking up a solution rarely solves a problem. Acting on it is just as important. Here is real truth: “thinking” really involves thinking with your heart, head and gut (body) which implies that thinking and acting are often overlapping activities. Analyze/Act is therefore a continuous effort to slowly but steadily inch towards the solution.

It is iterative - Think -> Act -> Accept/Reject -> Think -> Act -> Accept/Reject ...

1. Analyze to see which region you lie in. After step 1 and 2, the answer to this might differ - so be aware of that.



2. If you are in a combined region (4, 5 or 6), you are stuck rather firmly between two of your three components. (Remember I called the heart, brain and body the members of your internal governing body). More often than not, two of the three members here are strongly bound and are helping each other and you slide the downward spiral. The distant third member is rarely heard in this case. In such cases, you have to tease yourself out of your spiral slowly, using the third member to pull the dominant members in the direction you want – slowly and one at a time. For example, if you are in region 4 and feel stuck between your emotions and thoughts, then your solutions will be achieved by choosing actions (the third member) that involve emotions and actions that involve thoughts. Use activities that are in the thoughts/emotions box (to tease your thoughts in the right direction) and the actions/emotions box (to tease your actions in the right direction).

Mare and Stacey seem to be in combined regions. Mare is a victim of her thoughts and actions. I have made some assumptions here but it seems like she is telling herself it is wrong to eat sweets but is acting contrary to it. She does get upset but only AFTER she has consumed the sweets. Mare is stuck firmly between her thoughts and wrong actions with no emotional component(my assumption) to either of them.

Stacey here is caught between her thoughts and emotions. She is mostly upset with the clutter in her home. She is not able to really think beyond that since the physical clutter

is translating into mental clutter as well. She has not really acted on it much until now. Yes, she got an organizer, but that is more of a mental decision than a physical action on her part.

3. If you are in a pure region, you have been strongly consumed by one member of the governing board – the acting Hitler. In this case, you need to choose activities that involve only the other two members (and give acting Hitler a break).

Lance is in the region of thoughts. He has thought a lot about his issue, which is great. But my guess is that he will not feel a sense of fulfillment unless he acts on his thoughts or makes an emotional commitment to all the thinking he has been doing. He has probably been thinking his situation so much that he probably needs a break from the thinking to get a truer perspective of his situation. It is time to do that. With time he will get a better sense of he “feels” about his writing and what writing involves in the long run. The little action steps here might redefine the situation for Lance and/or just inch him towards a long term solution.

- **Mare:** As mentioned before I believe Mare is in a combined region of thoughts and actions. She knows that eating sweets is wrong for her but she is having a hard time controlling her actions. What is missing here is the underlying emotional connection/current between her actions and her thoughts. Some emotion/thoughts activities that could help Mare are
 - Reading as much as she can about how bad sugar is for the human mind and body. Read extensively and read material that is thought provoking and shocking (in order to evoke emotional responses). I do not know what Mare’s motivation for exercise is but she needs to work on transferring the same motivation here. Is she afraid of being fat and unhealthy? Is she rewarding herself in a positive way?
 - Watch documentaries that relate to health and diet. Visuals have more of a lasting emotional impact. Identify the biggest fear with respect to the ill effects of sugar and hang on to it to prevent from eating too many sweets

Some action/emotion activities would be:

- Cooking healthy. Enjoying other foods. Make a ritual of eating healthy. Try to really enjoy the act of eating other foods such as fruit. Think of times when she has sugar cravings and pre-plan an emotionally satisfying activity such as eating a favorite fruit while reading the best blogs etc.
- Complement eating less sweets with drinking lots of water. This is great and it works for me. I carry water bottle with me at all times and it works like a security blanket. I enjoy the ritual of taking a break and filling my bottle. Water feels great for the body and skin and I have started to believe it has a big hand in helping me maintain my weight as well.
- Say no. Voice the emotions and talk about how bad sweets are for her with everyone - just as she would talk about how good it feels to exercise. Talk about her your little achievements

The main idea for Mare is to find her underlying emotions and use them appropriately. Mare is extremely well read and it should not be hard for her to find a lot of repulsive material explaining the ill effects of sugar. Since she is already exercising she should work on finding the emotional motivators behind her discipline for exercise. Finally, at moments when she cannot seem to control her desire for sweets, she should have some “feel good actions” that she can turn to.

- **Lance:** Lance is stuck in think-land. He needs to immerse himself in activities that involve actions and emotions. Ideally, the actions will involve something he will make a part of his future (writing) and something that will explore him giving up the seemingly unimportant(his present job). By noting his emotional response to these activities. Best thing to do is to get intensely involved in action/emotion activities such as:
 - Create a dreamboard. Talk about the things that really matter (not the writing, but how you like to feel etc) with your spouse.
 - Write your emotional/financial goals in life. Talk to family about what kind of a future they are looking forward to.

- Talk to writers about their life and lifestyle (not about writing). Ask them about their best and worst times. Is this the life you look forward to?
- Do not think about writing but choose a writing project(to make money) and just write. Take a week of vacation from your present job and write as you would write if you decided to pursue writing as a career.
- Is there a project that involves writing at the present job? Can that be picked up?

The main idea for Lance here is to stop thinking about his choices and create situations to start “acting and feeling” as if he has already made certain decisions. Like giving himself a trial run. If these activities give positive feedback then Lance takes bigger and bigger steps towards his goal of becoming a writer such as slowly increasing his writing work and reducing the hours at his present job. Or if he gets a very good feeling from his trial projects he could decide to just quit his full time job if he believes he has the financial cushion to do that.

- **Stacey:** Stacey’s home and mind are cluttered. She is upset. She is consumed by her thoughts and emotions. She desperately needs to balance her life out with some actions.
 - First and foremost, Stacey needs to act on acting by getting rid of 80% of the items in her home. Boxing it away would be the easiest. Put away most of the clothes, toys, dishes and knick knacks. We probably use just 20% of the stuff 80% of the time, so Stacey should be just fine. And she should do this knowing that it is temporary and she can get anything out of a box if she really wants to.
 - With much much lesser stuff around the house, Stacey is ready to now take baby steps to solve the real problem and make it a lifestyle. Stacey is ready to get consumed by action/thought and action/emotion activities. Stacey needs to take about 10 - 15 minutes every couple of hours and do something that makes her “feel good”. Turn on the music and iron a couple of clothes. Put half the laundry away. Wipe a counter clean and shiny. Take joy and notice the little

actions of cleaning she is doing. Take her mind away from focusing on a clutter free home to focusing on a clutter free counter, a clutter free table and a clutter free room. Celebrate the clean space by putting just one object there - such as the reflection of her authentic self.

- Try to do mundane activity like iron clothes while thinking about creative ways to get kids to participate in cleaning the house. Hire a sitter for an hour everyday and tackle cleaning the high priority areas while the kids are kept busy. Take 15 minutes before going to bed and tidy up. Box away any unnecessary lurkers.

The idea for Stacey here is to choose activities that do not just involve cleanup but end up feeling like a break in her day. Her focus should be away from the clutter and on the little clean spaces and sanctuaries that she is creating. She will never have a completely clutter free home but she can reduce the clutter and create clutter free spaces. Stacey's progress might be slow but she will certainly succeed if she 1. boxes away 80% of her stuff and 2. focuses on the good feeling behind what she has already cleaned and takes focus away from the existing clutter.

It is important to note that this step could take weeks, months or years. Monitor your progress with every new activity you try. Stick with the ones that work and discard what does not. Redefine your problem and/or your goals as and when you think appropriate. Be very mindful of what effect your choices are having on your initial goal.

Step 6 : Shield

- **Take pride in your achievements but store memories of the uphill battle.**
- **Recognize familiar landscapes and act quickly.**
- **Treat the core of the issue, not the symptoms.**

In business strategy terms this would be called “raising barriers of entry”. Once you have worked on a problem and are close to a solution you have to safe guard yourself from the problem attacking you again. Awareness is the single most effective way for us

to do this. Do not get paranoid, but learn to notice small signs that the problem may be creeping back. This is easier than we think. Since we have done all the work and made the progress up until then in small steps of analyze/act, falling backwards just puts us in a landscape we recognize well. Awareness of the landscape should kick us back into action mode. Secondly, take great pride in your progress and achievements. Talk about it and accept it when people give you complements. When we take pride in something we have accomplished we tend to naturally safeguard it. The sense of satisfaction we achieve while working through a problem is the greatest motivator for us to keep the problem/situation away.

Have you had situations that Mare, Lance and Stacey have talked about? What has worked for you? Do you think this framework applies in your life? Share your thoughts and ideas here.

Life Balance, Part Two: It's a Jigsaw Puzzle — By Shelly Kneupper Tucker, [This Eclectic Life](#)

By anyone's standards, my Daddy was a successful man. He owned his own electrical contracting company and made money hand over fist. His hours were long, but he got *everything* done every day. On weekends, he took the family to our vacation home (a trailer) at Lake Texoma. Though he spent a lot of time fishing, he fished as aggressively as he worked. He was always going, *going, going*.

At the age of 52, my Daddy sold his company and retired to the dream home he had built at the lake. He planned to spend his "sunset years" fishing and traveling with Momma, gardening, cooking, and waiting on the grandbabies to be born.

Before the first year of his retirement was over, my Daddy had a heart attack.

He had worked so hard during his lifetime that he never took time for himself. He didn't take *care* of himself. Though he recovered from that attack, he was never healthy again. He had open heart surgery five years later and then a *host* of other diseases that slowed him to a crawl until the end of his days.

I spoke in [Part One](#) about a woman I knew who was "walking a tight rope ... blindfolded ... *while juggling chainsaws* ... without a net!" She had her life packed *full* of activities, and was so busy that she was physically exhausted. Yet, she felt her life was in balance because she was well organized — she got "everything done." Every activity was scheduled in her calendar and "to do" list — right down to the "*spontaneous play time*" with her children.

I have a hard time believing that she is *really* enjoying *any* of the activities that she does. I worry that she is on the same fast track that my Daddy took.

I firmly believe that we have to find balance in our lives, but I don't want to think of "balance" as walking a tightrope. And, I think that perhaps we need *perspective* more.

I like to think of life as a *jigsaw puzzle*. We have to work to fit all the pieces of our lives together: family life, career, education, hobbies, and most importantly *time to take care of ourselves*.

In order to successfully complete a jigsaw puzzle, sometimes you have to step back and look at the whole picture in perspective. I think that to attain balance in our lives, that's the very first step.

Look at your life in perspective. What are the activities that make up your day ... week ... month? Which of those activities are essential in your life? *Don't forget to add "time to take care of yourself" to the list.*

Getting perspective is something we should do *often* because we change and grow as we age. The things that are important in our twenties might not be so essential in our fifties.

Prioritize those essential areas of your life. Determine your goals for each area, and the steps you need to take to reach those goals.

Simplify. Your high school English teacher told you that everything improves with editing. Make some choices. At first you might *think* that there is nothing that you can delete from your list of activities. *Look harder.* There are pieces of the puzzle that might not fit right now.

For instance, if you are juggling a demanding job *and* raising children, this *might* not be the best time to try learn to snorkel, take up basket weaving *and* try to get your graduate degree. Or, if all *five* of your children are involved in *ten* different extra-curricular activities, you might have to get them to pare it down so you don't spend every evening as a shuttle bus driver. Will it warp little Johnnie for life if he can't be in Boy Scouts, soccer, karate, guitar class, and take horseback riding lessons? *No*, it won't. And, it will leave him some time to just be a little kid (and leave *you* some time to breathe).

Learn to say, "No." It's a simple word, really, and it's the same in several languages. I promise you that the world will *not* fall apart if the PTA asks you to head a committee

and you say “no.” And, if you show up at a meeting, you *know* someone will ask you, so be prepared.

You do not have to qualify the “no.” Don’t get defensive and tell your reasons why. Just say no. At the very *least*, learn not to say “yes” immediately. Learn to say, “Let me think about it and I’ll get back to you.”

Delegate. There is nothing in the rule books that says you have to be all things to all people. I *know* that the media has us convinced that we have to be supermom or superdad. But, we are *humans*. The kids can learn chores around the house (even at very early ages). Other members of a committee can help with assignments. You do not have to do everything by yourself.

Relax. Your house doesn’t have to look like a picture from Elle Decor (unless photographers from that magazine or on their way to shoot pictures!). You don’t have to serve a five course meal every night. If you didn’t weed your flower bed, *probably* the home owner’s association won’t kick you out. Stop measuring yourself by impossible standards.

Start over with the first step. These are all lessons that I have learned the hard way. I admit that I don’t always have an easy time following my own advice, because I inherited my Daddy’s Type A personality. I keep reminding myself of my resolve each day (reminding myself is at the top of my “to do” list). I promise it gets easier as you go along.

Refresh Again — By [Transformative Living](#)

I would install a refresh button for my mind and body. What would it feel like if we had a “refresh button” for our minds?

On my computer if I think that something new may be in my Inbox or on the current internet page I just hit the refresh button. I make a conscious choice to do this because I am either hoping for something new or I am aware that what I am seeing on my screen may no longer be the most up-to-date data.

For me, a refresh button holds more hope than “putting it all behind me” as if I can drop all that my body has encountered. This common piece of advice has undertones that:

- a) somehow we can just wipe out old data (aka experiences) and start with a clean slate
- b) that even difficult or challenging old data serves no purpose in our lives
- c) that we can ignore what our body knows and holds in our cells, muscles, gut all about that experience and that ignoring it means that cellular bodily-felt data doesn't exist for us really.

The internet metaphor holds more hope for me:

- I can refresh my experience and still be on the same page; in the refreshing I may see what is new just now
- I can acknowledge I have a “history folder” where all my experiences are recorded and filed
- I can acknowledge I have favourites pages

So, how would it feel to live remembering to refresh?

It might encourage me to notice how today is different from yesterday. I might notice that my partner is not in the same frame of mind even though I am carrying some of yesterday into today.

I might stop in the middle of a conversation or interpersonal encounter and refresh and then notice I am feeling different to when the conversation/encounter started or the other(s) are not doing/saying what I expected.

I might stop at some point in a habitual reaction and try and see if something new is here that shifts my experience. I might not load my normal program.

I might notice the play of light and shadow in my visual field or the shifting sounds around me. I might feel my body, how I am holding it, how it is connecting to the environment through touch, heat, movement.

I might use “refresh” to take a new, fresh breath to connect inwardly to how I am in there.

I might take something with which I feel familiar and perceive it in a new light.

I might reframe an experience by capturing more data.

What might you do if you had a refresh button?

Juggling Life's Balls — By Urban Panther, [Urban Panther's Lair](#)

I have jumped right into this initiative with both feet, because I am such an expert on balance. Well, maybe not exactly an expert. Alright, I kind of suck at it, but that definitely means I have something to say.

The first image that came to mind, when I thought of life balance, was me juggling a whole bunch of balls. And I mean a whole bunch! All different colours and sizes, and each labeled in bold black lettering. IT Project Manager, Mom, Girlfriend, Friend, Sister, Daughter, Cook, Dishwasher, Pet Owner. And the balls kept multiplying until eventually I dropped each and every one of them.

Did I mention I totally suck at Life Balance?

But then I realized that I was juggling the entirely wrong set of balls! I didn't need all those; I just need four. And they happen to coincide with the personal core values that I established using a technique posted by Davina, at Loving Pulse, which are:

Physical: with a smile on my face and a sparkle in my eyes, I tune into the wonders of my physical body.

Intellectual: I use my creativity and wit to provoke thoughts in myself and others.

Emotional: I move through my life content and happy, exploring my passions and love.

Spiritual: I honour the Lord and Lady, and revel in the third stage of womanhood, The Crone, having passed successfully through Maid and Mother.

And the really neat thing is, that I don't have to have all four balls in the air at the same time. I can put one or two down once in awhile for a rest. As long as I keep rotating them, such that they all get their turn in a timely manner, my life is quite balanced indeed.

Hey, maybe I don't suck so badly at Life Balance after all!

Are you 'in balance' or are there one or two balls that need to be brushed off and put back into play?

Achieve Success While Maintaining a Healthy Work Life Balance — By Kathy Hendershot-Hurd, [Virtual Impax](#)

Entrepreneurship is a lot like athletic competition: if you don't prepare yourself mentally AND physically, you'll find you don't have what it takes to play the entire game. The competition in the business world is grueling and relentless and you have to be able to play until the final buzzer!

This is one of those “Do as I say - not as I do” kind of blog posts for me. Like [Monika Mundell](#), I too have been suffering the health consequences of living a life that has fallen out of balance.

Success is all about balance.

I love word pictures and here's one to illustrate my point: to achieve success in your business, you must stand upon a three legged stool. The three legs of the stool are:

- Exercise
- Eat Right
- Sleep

Trying to build a business which requires you to work 12 - 16 hours a day without doing those three essential things is a recipe for disaster.

It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others.

Here is my story of life balance disaster. Let it serve as a warning to others.

It started 6 months ago when I fell out of the habit of daily exercise. I believe exercise is an essential ingredient in your quest for success. Your body was created to move, not to sit in a chair all day. Daily exercise sharpens not only your body, but your mind as well.

In my case, exercise is the foundation of EVERYTHING healthy and good in my life.

Exercise serves to keep my diet “healthy”.

For example, if I try to eat my favorite food of all time - Pop-Tarts [cue angelic singing] - and exercise, I'll find that I struggle to finish my workout. If however, breakfast is a bowl of steel cut oats or an omelet, I'll have enough energy to exercise and then jump into working. If I don't eat healthy, I see the effects when I exercise.

Exercise also helps you get a good night's sleep.

When I'm exercising, the quality and quantity of my sleep is GREATLY improved. When I don't exercise, well - I begin to become acquainted with the various mattress companies infomercials which run during the wee hours of the morning.

So for more than 3 years, my day would begin by putting on my walking shoes, putting a leash on my dog and walking a mile or more every morning. If 7:00 AM rolled around and I didn't have on my walking shoes, my dog would begin barking relentlessly until I started our pre-walk ritual. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that silly dog could tell time!

Then, I came down with the flu. I guess the dog knew something was up because instead of launching his full scale high decibel barking assault, he just whimpered and whined outside my bedroom door.

Well, the habit was broken with the dog after a week - and when the daily exercise stopped, everything else went to hell in a hand basket.

So at this point in time, I'm not walking, I'm busy working and my family is subsisting on Pop-Tarts, frozen pizzas and fast food. It should come as no surprise that I began having trouble sleeping about this time.

Fast forward just a few months. I feel like crap and my twisted, nutrition deprived mind decides the problem lies in a partially impacted wisdom tooth that has recently emerged.

It's not my junk food diet that is making me feel like crap. It's not my lack of exercise that is making me feel like crap. It's not the fact that I'm only sleeping 4 hours a night that I feel like crap- it's my tooth that is the root of all evil.

In a nutshell, my idiot dentist prescribes an antibiotic to which I have a reaction which the leaflet says could be fatal. When I call the office, the woman says, "Don't worry about it. We'll see you next Tuesday." The idiot dentist pulls the infected tooth and the infection rages out of control. A month later, a doctor is telling me, "This is really serious. You could die." I walk out with a referral to an ENT and enough prescriptions to start my own pharmacy.

After CAT scans, blood tests, specialists and way too many hours sitting in doctor's waiting rooms, I'm really regretting NOT paying attention to maintaining a healthy life balance.

Oh, I'm so back on the "wagon" when it comes to diet and exercise - the sleep thing just follows naturally when I'm doing the first two.

It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others.

Don't wait until you're making the rounds of various doctor's offices to pay attention to the "basics" you need to achieve success. Trust me, productivity takes a NOSE DIVE when you're spending your days in a doctor's waiting room!

If the three legged stool is in balance - exercise, eat right and adequate sleep - then you have a firm foundation upon which to operate your business. If you think you can "cheat" the system - think again. It's true - an ounce of prevention is really worth a pound of cure!

I thought I was invincible - and I discovered I'm human. I guess that discovery is just another part of the aging process!

Be an Optimist — By Dave Jones, [Your Friendly CPA](#)

On the surface life balance to me is balancing family and career, saving for tomorrow or living for today, or the many items that we try to balance in our lives.

However, this is just the surface of life balance. Life is 10% what we make it and 90% how we take it. Applying this principle to my life, my attitude has more to do with my life than how I have applied the daily activities. What is he talking about you ask? What I mean is that even if I have my 10% in balance; my career time versus my family time, and work versus play, if I am still approaching this with a negative pessimistic attitude will I truly be happy?

I believe we must get our 90% in check before working on our 10%. I believe we can learn to be optimists. We can learn to approach each and every event and challenge in our lives with a positive attitude, find the silver lining. With that being said, I know some may have medical conditions that take precedence over their attitude, I am not a medical professional and for those that do face these challenges, please consult a professional.

For those who do not have any underlying medical conditions here are a few tips to being optimistic. However before applying the tips, you can go into this exercise knowing that optimists tend to have overall health benefits compared to pessimists. In a 2002 Mayo Clinic report, studies showed those with an optimistic view tend to live longer than their pessimistic counterparts. The study also showed optimists reported:

- Fewer problems with work and daily activities
- Less pain and fewer limitations due to pain
- Less interference from physical or emotional problems
- Increased energy
- Feeling more peaceful, happier and calmer

Life will inevitably be faced with challenges and frustrations. It's up to you to improve your life and enhance your overall being. You can do a number of things to experience greater joy and pleasure in life:

- **Exercise.** Aerobic exercise releases endorphins - the feel good substance -which reduces stress, depression and anxiety. Next time you get upset try taking a half hour walk and leave the I-Pod at home. Enjoy the sounds and smells around you and concentrate on counting your blessings. It will take practice but be cognizant of focusing on the positive.
- **Eat Well.** Your body is a machine and needs to be properly nourished to function. Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains can improve the way you feel.
- **Get plenty of rest.** Sleep refreshes you. It improves your attitude and gives you energy for physical activity and coping with stress.
- **Reduce Stress.** Stress is a killer. Eliminating stress and conflict in your life will be rewarding.

Another suggestion is to start your day with an optimistic attitude, get out of bed 15 minutes early and get your mind in order to be positive for the day. Spend the 15 minutes in solitude and prepare for the upcoming day. Try repeating some of these positive affirmations:

- Today, I am in control of my attitude no matter what happens. I am vital & energetic.
- I respond to stressful situations in healthy and healing ways. I am serene & peaceful.

If you are a true pessimist at heart, take your time but be confident that you can change your attitude. When we get our attitudes in check then we need to make sure our life's activities are in balance. I am sure everyone has heard that no one has lain on their

death bed wishing they had spent more hours at the office. But first let's concentrate on the 90% of life, how we take it, and then get your 10% in check, how we make it.

Balancing the Unbalancable — By Kip de Moll, **[Zen and the Art of the Midlife Crisis](#)**

Here's a little ditty that goes something like this:

Since I was very young, random phrases have struck me as a bolt of lightening or like being covered with a blanket on a cold night. Inspired to explore their boundaries, some of these ideas I have determined to grow into a story or song.

Rarely has this been planned or committed with specific intention. In fact, if ego becomes involved (or the vision of a book jacket arises), the process stutters painfully, or halts completely, and that particular idea is usually abandoned.

Raised in a practical home of comfort and sensibility, however, although artistry was celebrated, I have not been able to dare myself in actuality to pursue this passion with all my heart. My head in the clouds has been balanced by feet on the ground, hands earning a living as a contractor while my fingers ached to strum and type.

Amazingly (and probably predictably), this balance has been most unhealthy.

As construction has often served to put food on the table, for me, it has been only marginally more stable than a life envisioned as a freelance writer. Prone to recession and the whims and satisfaction of clients, it has paid well when it pays and other times suffered devastating droughts of dollars, the roller coaster creating a tension that contributed greatly to the dissolution of my marriage.

Still, a balance was carefully struck between writing contracts and creating stories and songs. While I always anticipated taking time to truly express the creative passions, day in and day out, the choice has been made to renovate and repair homes; my contribution to the economics of the World going round. Music and stories, if they happened at all, happened at night, and after awhile, dried up to nothing. Such is life, I cheerfully lamented.

While I have easily blamed my financial struggles on slow markets, disappointed clients, and the challenges of running an all too (for me) complicated business, I am beginning to understand just how unbalanced my life has actually been. It is a vicious handicap to prioritize an occupation while continually telling yourself you really want to be doing something else.

In these past months, I have been listening to my heart. So many mornings now, I head for the door, only to pause at the computer...and discover 2 or 3 hours later how fast time has flown. If an idea sings loudly enough, I pull to the side of the road, or sit on a bucket of mud, to scribble pages of yellow pads.

Today, I strive for less and create so much more. Instead of running a company building \$200,000 additions, I make some money on little necessary projects for people needing the hand. Balancing that physical skill with an emotional talent to organize thoughts out of an ethereal mist, Life is charged with an excitement I have little realized.

Daring myself to be off-balance, I have never felt better, nor been more productive.