

## Life Balance

Life is a struggle...a very real struggle. No matter your race, socioeconomic status, family origin, education or career, if you are still vertical and breathing, life is a struggle! But struggles don't have to take you out of the game. We have to know they will come and when they do, we deal with them. Jesus told his disciples, "in this world YOU WILL have tribulation (trouble), but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". Jesus was warning them just before he commissioned them to do great things. The warning wasn't to discourage them but rather to prepare them; to assure them of answers when the struggle comes.

At the end of every blog I compose, I refer to living your best life now. I am a firm believer in this. We don't have to accept a life that is void of good health, good relationships, adequate finances, peace, joy and contentment. We make choices every single day that either moves us closer to our best life or further from it. I'm convinced that obtaining and maintaining a Life Balance is crucial to living your best life.

Most people that are experiencing lack in any area of their life, can usually trace it back to bad decisions and or a negative Life Balance. In this blog I want to more specifically address Life Balance. There are six areas I want to focus on: Spiritual, Health, Family/Home, Career/Education, Finances and Other Relationships. All of these areas are independently important, but are also inter-dependent for good Life Balance. So let's look at each of these areas individually and then we will talk about how they work together for ultimate Life Balance.

1. **Spiritual.** I make it no mystery about my faith. I am a follower of Christ. But no matter what your preference when it comes to religious beliefs or lack thereof, feeding and caring for your spirit is vital. We are spirit beings. The "real us" is not seen with the eye, but rather completely experienced when you know a person on a spiritual level. It is important to daily nurture your spirit. I do this through prayer and meditation. I NEVER skip a day to be quiet and meditate; prayer always follows my meditation. In addition, I study my Bible each day to "feed" my spirit and equip me for the day ahead. It is through this time I am able to grow and expand my inner self. This in turn enables me to minister to others, to be the giver I love to be and move in my gift...doing the things for which I was created!
2. **Health.** Oh my, where do I begin! Without good health, goals are stunted. All we have dreamed about is halted. Just to be able to survive from day to day becomes a real challenge. The quality of our health has a direct impact on everything we attempt to do in life as well as our relationships and ability to enjoy them. There are several areas that we need to particularly take care of concerning health. First, make sure to keep current with annual appointments such as eye, general health, dental and those other exams such as mammograms for women, PSA for men, etc. Second, managing your stress will keep you more healthy mentally and physically. Don't hesitate to ask for help if you have difficulty doing this. You may need to see a mental health professional, talk to a close friend or family member, engage in coaching...no matter which,

don't be afraid to admit you're overwhelmed and need help. We all experience this from time to time. Third, engage in regular exercise (helps with stress) and work to get your daily diet as healthy as possible. You are what you eat and it definitely impacts how you feel. Reduce your caffeine intake and increase your water!! Fourth, get adequate rest. Nightly sleep 7-9 hours but weekly carve out a day or two half days to just chill and enjoy things that make you smile and laugh!

- 3. Family/Home.** This is a really tough area to tackle because often we take family and our home life for granted. It's so easy to get so caught up in life, that we assume our family and home life will be there no matter how much we neglect it. Two things here to remember: 1. Family comes before career, friends, and any other obligation you might have. Mind you, sometimes the order of these things will have to shift when there are necessary demands, but family is always first. Continually disappointing your spouse and children due to your work and overextending yourself is unacceptable, if you want to maintain healthy relationships. Learn the art of saying "No"! Once arriving home from work, leave work at the door. Determine a cut off time for responding to emails, phone calls and texts. There should be time everyday/evening that is devoted strictly to your family. You will have to plan this and exercise discipline in this area to be fully successful. But it is totally worth it! 2. Your home is your "haven", your escape from the world. Don't allow anyone or anything to violate your home and the rules of your home. Your home is your sanctuary; decorate it as such and treat it as such. Your home should be comfortable, clean, free of clutter, and furniture and decor beautifully arranged so that it is inviting and offers you peace and tranquility.
- 4. Career/Education.** For you and your family to thrive, especially if you are the primary income earner, the proper training and or education is necessary to be the best in your field and the most marketable. Even if you are not the primary earner, but a contributor none the less, this is vital to your success, no matter what the career. Make sure that you have brainstormed over your career goals and have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish so that you not only are a "bread winner" but a satisfied and contented person wherever you land. It is important to your life balance that you enjoy what you do. There is a saying, "if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life". Now, we know we can't always start out in that perfect situation. But that's where your goals play an important role in your success. Having goals, writing them down and keeping them in focus will help you to land that position, job, business opportunity or whatever you have on the radar!
- 5. Finances.** The quickest way for you to get your life out of balance is to get deeply in debt. Debt is one of the major contributors to divorce, bankruptcy, stress, and major forms of depression. Living beyond our means has become very popular in the United States. Credit is too easily extended and we are too easily enticed. Most people these days want "now" what their parents worked their entire lives to achieve. I want to encourage you to sit down and develop a sound financial strategy that includes a monthly budget, college funds, retirement and investment. I highly recommend Dave Ramsey's book "The Total Money Make Over". I have personally used his strategies for years and I can attest...they WORK!!!!

**6. Other Relationships.** I can't imagine life without friends and extended family. These relationships are often forged at work, with parents raising children that are the ages of our children, at church, civic organizations and anywhere we find ourselves invested. You can count yourself blessed if you've been fortunate to have one to three really good friends during your lifetime and any that have stayed the course throughout your life. Often these people become extensions of our families. They become our cheerleaders, our helpers, confidants, and huge sources of comfort during difficult times. The saying that "blood is thicker than water" is not always the case. Many people have been abandoned by family members and found themselves on the outside of the situation. It was only their dear friend that stayed by them and allowed them to be who they are. Our friends and extended family enrich our lives and add to our happiness, but there has to be boundaries in place in order to keep your Life Balance. These relationships certainly have their place and hold great value, but we have to make sure that they don't become a focus at the risk of neglecting all the other areas in our lives. I'm aware of a situation where a woman allowed her close friendship with her girlfriend to become so significant that it almost cost her, her marriage. She made that relationship more important than her husband and their family time. Take care to make sure your relationships are in the proper order to create the balance you need in all areas.

To ensure you are living in a good Life Balance, I recommend the following exercise:

#### **LIFE BALANCE EXERCISE:**

1. Get a pen and paper. List in order the six areas I've discussed, leaving space between each.
2. Under **Family/Home** and **Other Relationships**, list all the people that are involved in these areas. List what you currently do to engage with each person. Are these quality relationships? Think of things you can begin to do to make family time special, at least once a week for starters. Estimate the percentage of time you spend with each group on a regular basis. List how you can improve your boundaries and balance with each group. Make a list of things you know that your family enjoys. Take pictures of each room of your home. Look at each picture and list your impressions of each...do they make you feel at ease or are they a source of tension? What can you do to change that? Move the furniture around, organize a corner, get rid of clutter, etc? Enlist a friend you trust to evaluate this too! Consider enlisting a professional organizer and or decorator for ideas. Make this a family project.
3. Under **Career/Education** list your immediate goals and what resources you will need to accomplish them and anyone you might need to help you. Write the time period needed to accomplish these goals. Write where you would like to see yourself in 2 years, 5 years and 10 years. What sacrifices will you have to make in order to reach your goals/dreams. Consider the sacrifices your family will be required to make. Are your goals worthy of all the sacrifice you've contemplated? Are your goals realistic? Should some of your goals be revisited and revised based on your resources, circumstances and current obligations? Are you currently making the best of your time and resources? Are you a procrastinator?

4. Under **Finances**, list your debts and other financial obligations. Do the math and determine how long it will take you to be debt free, considering your current circumstances and income. Also, list any other ways you might be able to earn additional income. Develop a budget that is realistic and stick to it. Consider developing in detail the specific items I discussed in this section above. Make a verbal and written commitment to your partner to be debt free. Make a “wish list” of things you could do/want to do if you had no debt.
5. Be honest and go through the **Health** section and evaluate you're status on annual exams. List them and place a yes or no beside them. Evaluate your diet. Make a list of what you normally eat during the course of a week. List snacks and actual meals. List possible ideas for changing. For example: Weight Watchers, the mediterranean diet, vegan, or check out my blog post about this. Evaluate how often you exercise or if you do this at all. If not, consider beginning a routine that includes light to moderate exercise and increase as you go. I personally love the “7 Minute Workout” app. Consider joining a gym, etc. Commit to 3-5 days A week and build from there. Get the entire family involved!
6. Look at the **Spiritual** section at the beginning and judge yourself as to what you are or are not doing in this particular area. What can you do to institute a daily routine of meditation, prayer, and quiet time. Do you have a place you could create for this, or a place you know that is available to you? Make a plan to start implementing this time, at a particular time of day. It doesn't have to be more than 10-15 minutes. Just make a plan to start this! Consider incorporating journaling during this time. It will help clarify your thoughts and help you to maintain focus during this time.
7. Look over all your information and create a “Vision Board”. Title your board “LIFE BALANCE”. Begin to list in order of significance each of the six areas. You may find that one area needs more attention at the moment than the others. Rank them in order, top to bottom, from most important to least. Of course all are important, but I'm referring to areas that need more work than others. From the answers you gave during this exercise, list to the side and under each area, action steps you can take to better focus on each area. Develop at least three action steps for each category. Include resources needed and who can help. Lastly, place a deadline; a time frame for achieving satisfaction in each area. Some may be achieved almost immediately, while others, such as Finances may require a much longer time frame. Be realistic about this or you risk losing momentum and even worse, failure!

Once you've finished your “LIFE BALANCE VISION BOARD”, engage in positive encouragement with each other and fix your mind daily on these areas by keeping your Vision Board visible. Hopefully, you've included your entire family on developing this board. You will begin to notice that when one is discouraged about the improvements you are all trying to make, others will come along side them and encourage them and help them keep their motivation. Everyone in your family needs to realize the significance of the entire family living in

Life Balance. As parents, you are teaching your children how to avoid the pitfalls of a busy life and they will most likely follow your lead and develop this same strategy for themselves once reaching adulthood. Having a good Life Balance is key to living your best life every day! The planning exercise I listed and the creating of your board may take a few days or even a week. But don't let that keep you from examining your life and getting things in a balance that helps you achieve your dreams and goals!! Go over one "click" to "Courses" and find my new free, downloadable course "Creating a Vision Board". It will give you good ideas for creating your Life Balance Board!