

Life Balance and How to Attain It

We all face decisions that involve competing priorities. We all have three different lives or worlds that compete for our attention, energy and activity. These are our personal lives, our work-related lives, and our family lives. Our personal lives consist of our health, our inner private likes and dislikes, our inner beliefs, and our spiritual feelings. Our work-related lives consist of what we do to earn an income to provide resources to live and prosper. Our family lives consist of our relatives and friends and our relationships with each member.

As you can imagine, each of these worlds will attract our interests and can create various demands on our time, resources, and energy. When these worlds create demands that compete with the other, such that we must continuously choose one world at the expense of the other, we get out of balance.

How do you know when you have achieved life balance?

People achieve balance in their lives when they can consciously and subconsciously align their thoughts and activities with who they are and what they want to do, without conflict or guilt. People who are in balance, experience "being in the zone" of life. Life is good! In this article, we explore the steps to attaining life balance.

Step 1: Discover who you really are.

You will want to first discover who you really are, what you stand for, and what your beliefs and values are. There are two levels to research. The easiest and the most accessible is your conscious or rational you, where you logically dissect then evaluate things. But the real you is where your true inner values, beliefs, and spirituality are within your subconscious or intuition level. People learn to rationalize almost anything, but they cannot hide or escape from their inner core values. Conflicts and personal stress occur when the rational self accepts and conducts actions that are contrary to suppressed inner values. Take the time and energy to discover your inner values and beliefs, and allow your intuition to take center stage in your thoughts and action processes. When you follow your instincts in an environment that embraces you, you enter the "zone."

Step 2: Discover what you really want to do

We have all been told from birth what to do and what not to do. We follow many rules because doing so is best for living harmoniously with others and ourselves. But, along the way we are also told by parents, teachers, advisors, and bosses what we "should" and "should not" do to suit their personal agendas and perspectives. These are the "shoulds" that we carry with us and that we try to follow with very confusing and mixed results.

Most people have inner passions that really excite and motivate them. These passions develop early in life and change with time. Yet we suppress them. These passions are almost always good in nature and very positive. The executive may have a passion to create a rose garden. The homemaker may have a passion to play the drums. But they don't, because they do not recognize and accept them, and if they did, their conscious mind will rationalize that they "shouldn't" after responding to all of the previously implanted "shoulds" by others. Yet, both the executive and the homemaker feel something is missing and can't put a finger on it.

Everybody also has desires that are extremely important. These desires begin with the basics of life such as staying healthy, being secure, attaining food and shelter, being socially accepted, and having a loving inner circle to support us. These basic desires are rather easy to determine. Once you recognize that they exist, you will see that they are almost required for a normal existence.

Once these desires are accomplished, you will develop other desires, such as living in a warm climate, working outdoors, raising a happy and healthy family, and being acknowledged for being special. These are more personal in nature and are also less obvious. This is where the "shoulds" begin to enter the picture, and you find yourself following the desires you allow others to impose on you. For example, you might go to law school to become a lawyer because your parents strongly felt you "should" become a lawyer. Or you might become a full-time mom and raise a family early on in life because that is what everyone did where you grew up.

Step 3: Recognize and manage your conflicts

Life is a bowl of conflicts and stress occurs when competing forces interfere with your ability to decide what to do. Additional stress occurs when you feel bad when you do some things, and you feel that you "should" have done something else. Then you do not enjoy or even fully complete what you decide to do, because you continue to think you "should" be doing something else.

The executive will certainly have conflicts between leading her company and creating the rose garden. The homemaker will experience numerous conflicts between being a mother, a wife, and an individual person when she thinks about learning to play the drums and even more when she thinks about playing the drums with a band.

Once you can be honest with yourself and discover what your true passions and desires are, you will be in the position to determine what priorities you place on each. It will be much easier and clearer to evaluate and establish these priorities because you will know what the choices are and more importantly you will be the only person involved in making the decision. You will be free from having to consider the conflicting forces of the "shoulds" that are based upon what others want you to do. This freedom will be a great relief because you will not have to live through the agendas or desires of others, which can be a very tricky thing, even if you tried. Now it is only you deciding, and the choices become much easier.

The executive can decide that continuing in her position is a high priority, but that carving out four hours a week to work on the rose garden will provide her the relaxation and personal enjoyment she wants and needs to function better as an executive. She will be motivated to focus more on her executive duties as she is doing them, knowing that doing so will lead her to being able to exercise her passion of raising her own roses. Now she will enjoy doing both and will be better at participating in both functions with minimal conflict.

Step 4: Eliminate guilt imposed on you by others

People allow guilt to enter their world when they dwell on the fact that they are to blame for things they did or did not do. People take on the burden of being wrong and responsible for not meeting the expectations of others. Sometimes people feel guilty because some religions appear to impose guilt when followers are not perfect. Yet the fact is that everyone is fallible and will never be perfect. When you set expectations or allow others to impose expectations that you must be perfect and you inevitably fail to meet the purity of perfection, you feel guilty. Then you try harder to be perfect and feel even guiltier because you don't reach perfection again. The cycle continues.

Most people have an innate philosophy of life or spirituality that they need and want to follow. The key is to discover your spirituality and follow it. When you follow your own spirituality, you greatly reduce or eliminate the artificial guilt you feel because you let others impose their philosophy on you.

Step 5: Eliminate guilt you impose upon yourself

Another key to removing guilt is to recognize that you cannot always make the best decisions all of the time. One great philosopher, Claude Lunsford, said that you want to make decisions based upon

your true inner beliefs and purposes and the information you gather at the time. You evaluate the options available and make the best decision, based upon the truth. Then you want to accept the decisions as being the best you could have made at the time.

You do not want to impose guilt upon yourself for a less than perfect outcome. You might not have been able to know about other factors that would have affected your decision, or things might have changed that you could not have foreseen that changed the results of your decision. You do not want to look back and second guess yourself, but you want to accept your past decisions and learn from the new knowledge you gained to adjust your decision process for the most important issue at hand, which is to make better decisions in the future.

Step. 6: Follow the path YOU choose to achieve your chosen future goals.

Develop life goals for yourself and start the process to achieve them. Now that you know all about yourself, and how to make decisions without guilt, you are poised to use this information to visualize your desired life and develop a number of life goals that will take you to where you want to go. People reach life balance when they know where they want to go, set the goals to get there, and begin the steps to achieve their goals.

Life is a journey, and you now have everything you need to create the most desirable, most enjoyable and most fulfilling journey for yourself. Once you set your goals, you want take steps each day to reach your life goals, and you will not only be amazed at how well you will achieve them, but at how enjoyable and stress-free the journey will be.

Your desires, priorities, passions, and even sometimes your beliefs will change. That is very normal. Once you discover what your new ones are, you will want to create new goals accordingly, using the same process and continue your life journey in the new directions that you choose for yourself.

Enjoy the trip!