

FINDING BALANCE IN LIFE

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http://www.sideroad.com/Work_Life_Balance/finding-balance-life.html

Most people would agree that finding balance in life is important for achieving happy relationships and maintaining a positive attitude. As human beings we are blessed with the capacity to appreciate a wide variety of experiences. We can explore the world and learn new things, experiment with our creativity, develop special relationships, and change the circumstances of our environment.

But sometimes we get caught up with our day to day routines and lose sight of the opportunities life has to offer. We get busy with too much work, too many obligations, and yes, sometimes too much recreation. Paying too much attention to any one area of our lives can lead to a narrowed vision of life and cause us to feel as if something is missing. That is a signal to check the balance in our life. One of my favorite ways to find balance in my life is to take some time to think about how satisfied I am in seven major areas. By reflecting on each area and asking myself questions, I can explore the amount of energy I am devoting to each. I know my life is in balance if I can find joy and satisfaction in each area.

Here are the seven areas and a few questions that I use for exploration:

Special Relationships

When was the last time I spent special time with my family members?
Was the experience fulfilling and joyful?
When was the last time I spent time with my closest friend?
What special experience did I share with my spouse in the last week?

Social Interactions

When was the last time I expressed appreciation to a co-worker?
Have I taken advantage of opportunities to contribute to a committee?
How active am I in my community clubs, or civic organization?

Leisure Activities

What have I read recently that brings me joy?
What was the last movie I saw, just for fun?
What was the last piece of music that I heard that made me feel like dancing?

Health and Fitness

Am I joyfully consistent with my chosen exercise program?
Am I recognizing the benefits of stretching regularly?
What foods am I eating on a regular basis to support good nutrition?

Career and Finances

What was the last activity or project that I really enjoyed spending time on?
Each day, do I celebrate the progress I am making towards my business goals?
Am I saving money on a regular basis to prepare for the future?
Do I joyfully acknowledge the money that comes to me?
What actions do I take to consistently management money wisely?

Spiritual Development

When was the last time I took quiet time for meditation?

What was the last thing I read that truly inspired my spirit?

When was the last time I spent time with others who share my spiritual beliefs?

Now, let me outline a simple exercise that will help you to explore these areas of life for yourself.

Before you begin, keep in mind that while it is important to devote time and energy towards each area of life, **it isn't necessary to have equal amounts of activity in each area to create balance.** Think of the each life area as providing a special and unique contribution to the whole. An example of this is to think about the ingredients for a cake recipe. The varying amounts of each ingredient contribute to make a great tasting cake. However, if you were to use equal amounts of chocolate, flour, eggs and salt, the cake would not turn out right and taste awful.

Find a place where you won't be interrupted for a few hours and then, using separate sheets of paper for each; write the name of the life area at the top of the page. Below that write the question: What things am I doing now? Skip about half way down the page and write: What things do I want to add? Continue until you have a worksheet for each area.

Starting with the first sheet, take several minutes to think about that individual area. What are the things you are currently doing in your life that bring you happiness in that area? Write down as many individual activities or actions as you can. Don't try to judge the activities just write them down. Take your time, don't rush through it and be honest.

Next, think about some of things you aren't doing but you would like to do. You may have thought of some things while you were completing the last section. Write them down. It may help to think of times when you have said to yourself, "When I get more time I would like to..." fill in the blank.

Continue on with the rest of the sheets. Again, take your time and be honest. If it seems that some things overlap into other areas, just put them in the category that fits best for you at that moment. For example, playing basketball could be listed under Health and Fitness, Social Interactions, as well as Leisure Activities; just put it where you feel it fits best.

When you've completed all the areas review your lists. Decide how you feel about your level of satisfaction in each of the area: Are there areas you may be neglecting, or spending too much time in? Are there some activities you would like to add to your life, or stop doing?

Once you've completed this part of the exercise you will have a new perspective on how you channel your energy, and how it contributes to your satisfaction with life. With this knowledge, you can begin to rearrange some activities and create a more satisfying balance.

Choose an area you feel you would like to improve and plan to add a new activity. You may want to add several activities but, don't go too fast. Adding new activities to your life can be fun but it can also create some stress as you try to adapt to a new routine. Take your time, make one or two changes and then give yourself time to adjust, but most importantly have fun with it.

Using this exercise will help you in finding the perfect balance in your life.