

## WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance means to have a proper balance between work and lifestyle and ideally, that means we have enough time and energy for obligations and pleasures, and are able to live life in a gratifying way and to live it well. During the last months of 2014 I started delving into my work-life balance, striving to achieve a balance between my work and my life. Often it felt more like a juggling act than an actual balancing act. It seemed like the more I worked towards fitting in obligations and pleasure, the more chaotic life became, so I decided to throw out the concept of having a work-life balance.

Most of the time we are in survival mode, and we go through the same motions over and over. I feel, in hindsight, that we fall into survival mode because we do not have the tools, or understand what life-work balance truly looks like. Even if we are aware something is out of balance it is often hard to put our finger on it and shift it.

Our life is all that we do, period. We have five key areas that interweave, and each brings obligations and pleasures. It was unrealistic to lump those five into two definitive areas. That is when it became clear to me, that I needed to toss out the concept of having work-life balance. I only needed personal balance. Personal balance being what I am comfortable with, what fits for me. It means that I need to know myself, and be able to identify my priorities at any given moment. Life is constantly changing, and each day my balance would look different. It was about discovering my own formula for success, and you will discover your own formula.

The five key areas are as follows;

1. Job/Career
2. Financial
3. Physical Health/Wellness
4. Relationships
5. Spirituality

Can you see how finding a work life balance is really not ideal? Think about it for a moment, given the 5 areas I have just listed, can you determine which fall under work, and which fall under life? It is about finding our personal balance point between all areas of our life. If we think of a certain popular game where you push or pull one brick out and place it on top of the others carefully so as not to tip the tower over, that is more like life. We constantly flow with what is happening, rearranging and configuring our tower to serve us best.

Your job/career is whatever you do that is your work, typically it is what sustains you. You could have a 9 – 5 job, be self-employed, or a stay at home parent. This area fills up a large portion of your life, depending on what you do, you should love your career or job. Do you feel that you are valued as well as providing value? Your job/career also comes with a pay cheque that supports your finances, which in turn supports your lifestyle. Everything requires an energy exchange, and for the most part, money seems to be the favored energy. However, each person's definition of how much money they require is

different. Having too much money can cause just as much stress as not having enough. Your finances predicate how you support other areas in your life.

The third area is physical health and wellness. This area could be seen as the center of the wheel – with the other four spiking out in different directions. If we do not maintain our health, what do we have? By taking care of our physical, emotional, and mental bodies we function optimally in the other 4 key areas. This means ensuring, we take time for proper rest, relaxation, and exercise. It also means being able to nourish our bodies with healthy food, stimulate our minds with new interests and ideals, and being able to spend time with family and friends. All interweave with our finances, our jobs, our relationships and our spirit. It is important to understand that if we become unbalanced in the other areas our health and wellness will fall apart.

Relationships are not only with others but with ourselves. It is about our relationship with all the other life areas as well. How we interact with other people, ourselves, our job/career, our finances, our health and well-being, our spirituality, set the overall tone for balance. First and foremost, though, is our relationship with ourselves. If we are supportive of ourselves and comfortable in our own skin, we are better able to have healthy relationships with others and also the other four life areas. This is really where know thyself comes into play.

Spirituality will look different for each person. Some might say they are not spiritual, yet spirituality is basically about knowing oneself. Each of us should include some quiet time to reflect and ensure we are centered each day. This time will enable us to keep the tower of life balanced, this quiet time can help us to see what areas are lopsided and where we need extra support.

When we achieve balance – or a semblance of balance - in each of these five areas life flows effortlessly and efficiently. If one area is out of balance, it is our role to work on getting it back into balance. How do we achieve this balance in all areas? Like I said at the beginning, we each need to find our own formula. To build a foundation and help you discover your balance formula ponder the following;

- 1) What lifestyle do you want? What fits for you? Do you want a simple lifestyle or an extravagant lifestyle? Or do you want to just carry on in survival mode doing the same motions over and over and not really changing anything?
- 2) Know thyself. Without knowing yourself, you can't truly understand your optimal balance or identify your priorities. Be honest with yourself. You are the one living your life, not the others who are in your life. It takes understanding yourself to be able to balance your life.
- 3) Be flexible! No matter how much planning and preparation you put into your life you have to be ready for the unexpected. Life will not always flow as you think it should. You will need to be ready for the curveballs that come your way. The ability to think on your feet is a gift, and often you will not have time to think about these curveballs, you just need to swing at them and hope for a home run!
- 4) Patience. Rome was not built in a day. I think here of a trilogy, we are hooked by the first book which is so freaking amazing we can't wait for book two to hit the shelves. Along comes book two, we rush to purchase it, only to find it lagging and having us wonder why we waited with baited breathe for it to arrive. The third and final book hits the shelves and we let it sit there for a time before purchasing – but once we do –find the second book was building the history and paving the way for another freaking amazing book that leaves us wishing there were more in the series.

5) Surround yourself with a good support system. People you trust to have your back when you need it and who can slip in a “brick” to support the tower when it appears it is about to tumble. While balance is specific and personal to each of us, those who are around us play a big part in our achieving it.

My delving into my life balance brought me to the knowledge that I was living a gratifying life! I was able to balance obligations with pleasure to suit my needs and I did it well. Others might have disagreed, but for me it worked. I love life and all the blessings and challenges that come my way. Mostly what I learned from all this delving was that even if the tower crumbled I was left with a solid foundation. The cleanup might be ugly, but I am capable of rebuilding the tower, stronger each time using the lessons I have learned from previous towers. Besides, if I am having an unbalanced day there is balance in that as well, for it is showing me what area needs some attention. Each day is a new opportunity to practice achieving balance and at the end of the day if I did the best I could, given the curveballs tossed my way, I could still hit a home run!

If we do our best and don't lose sight of the bigger picture, we can all have balance and therefore peace in our lives. Determine what mix of work, family, play and giving back optimizes your talents and happiness, and set your own formula for success. You will be a winner each and every time, and in the end you will have achieved the right balance, fit for you.

*Namaste*

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