

# Balancing Act

by Katrina Mayer, Ph.D.



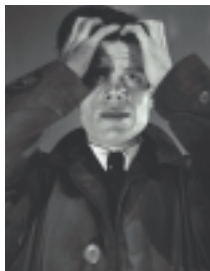
**H**ow many times have we all heard the phrase, “Eat a balanced diet?” Even though we have heard it frequently, how often are we able to put it into practice? Now, let’s take this concept one step further. If balancing our diets is challenging, how are we supposed to balance our whole lives? And what does it mean to be balanced anyway?

Perhaps it is a good idea to have an understanding of what balance is. Unfortunately, looking up the definition in the dictionary is more confusing than clarifying. The word balance can mean so many things. We can balance scales, balance a checkbook, balance arguments and balance books on our head, to name a few. Looking the word up in a thesaurus gives slightly better results. Some of the synonyms are equilibrium, symmetry, harmony and proportion. While this gives a clearer picture of what balance is, we are still left wondering how this applies in our lives.



When we were born, we were not handed a big register and told to keep track of the debits and credits that occur in our lives. And, while most of us were weighed at the hospital moments after birth, no one gave us a “life scale” and showed us how to put something on each side to keep things even. There are no exact measurements we can take to figure out if we are balancing our lives correctly. We tend to do it on an intuitive level, without equations or dials and gauges. There are no bells or buzzers when everything is in sync.

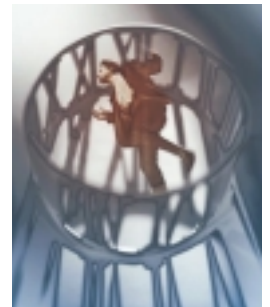
As a matter of fact, it is more likely that we will notice when our lives are out of balance than when they are in balance. Things don’t feel right when life is out of balance. Perhaps we get sick more often or can’t sleep well. We may experience anxiety or changes in appetite. We may get irritable or lose our temper more easily than usual. We may not be able to relax or may not feel like doing anything at all. These are some of the



symptoms of “out-of-balance-itis” and should be addressed as soon as we notice them.

One of the first things anyone needs to do when life seems off-kilter is stop for a few minutes (or more) and take an objective look at what is going on. Some people are better at this than others. Have no fear. If you are challenged by this, seek out a trusted friend or a therapist. Be honest and figure out which areas of your life have been getting too much attention and which have not been getting enough. Are you balancing financial, recreational, physical, educational and spiritual areas well? What can be done to get them into alignment?

Let’s start with the financial aspect of our lives. This area causes great stress for many people. Have you been ignoring some bills? Have you been spending too much time at work? Have you been spending too little time at work? Are the credit cards adding up? Do you have savings? How about retirement? If you feel that this part of your life is out of balance, there are financial planners and lots of great resources available to help things back in order.



Are you taking enough time to have some fun in your life? Are you laughing enough? Are you spending time with your family? Do you have a hobby? If you find yourself being too serious, it’s time to lighten up. Have fun. See a show. And laugh until your sides hurt. It’s great medicine and helps to keep things in balance.

How about your body? Are you taking care of yourself? Are you eating well? Are you exercising? Are you sleeping enough? Don’t underestimate the toll that a poor diet and lack of exercise can take on your general well-being. If this area is not in balance, take some long walks. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Get a good night’s sleep. And remember to breathe.



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