

## Life Balance

### 6 tips to bringing more balance into your life

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These days everyone is really busy, but always remember there is more to life than the daily grind. You may have responsibilities to your family, your work, your children's activities or your community. All these are competing for your valuable attention. Sometimes we let our schedule run our lives and railroad our priorities, as opposed to us taking charge of our schedule and priorities. The result is — exhaustion, being overwhelmed, stress, and frustration. Beware of warning signs that your life may have become off center, and take action today to bring a greater sense of balance to all the areas of your life! The suggestions below should be a great start.

#### **4 signs your life may be out of balance:**

- Your “to do” list appears to be the size of the Empire State building!
- You feel you are very busy but not sure you are accomplishing anything.
- You feel burned out! You are constantly tired, have headaches, backaches, or other physical and emotion signs of stress.
- You feel like you are living someone else's schedule and have lost your direction. You seem to be moving through life as if you have no choices, no purpose, no personal goals or freedom to pursue your highest values and priorities. You realize there may be an area or two of your life that you have neglected, as you have spent valuable time and attention in other areas.

#### **6 tips to bringing more balance into your life:**

##### **1. Acknowledge and accept that you cannot do everything all the time.**

You only have so many resources, of time, energy, money, etc. While it is understandable to want to accomplish much and please a number people, you are only one person and cannot always manage to do it all. Stop; take a deep breath and regroup. All you can do is all you can do, and all you can do is enough! Let go of the need for perfection, and of solving all problems for all people. You cannot do all that needs to be done, all the time. And that's OK.

## 2. **Manage yourself, not time.**

There is really no such thing as “time management.” But we can manage our activities. Everyone has the exact same amount of time, 24 hours in one day. Many days we wish we could just tack on a few more hours to finish a project, or to get more rest, or to do other things we would like to be able to squeeze into our day. Managing yourself reflects a sense of responsibility in what you do in a day, and in a lifetime. It is being proactive, and realizing the power of choice, and knowing what you do have control over. (See “[The Power of Personal Choice and Control](#)” article from the March 29<sup>th</sup> *More at Midday* show).

## 3. **“Add and subtract.”**

*Regarding activities:* What pressuring task are you willing to give up, or subtract, in order to have or achieve something more important in a different area? To do more of one thing, you must do less of others. You must be willing to cut some activities from your schedule – even if just temporarily – in order to accomplish higher priorities. When planning your week, determine which less important tasks or projects can wait. Subtract these from your weekly “to-do” list – and feel the sense of being overwhelmed lesson automatically.

*Regarding other people:* Identify “A” people in your life. These people build you up. They believe in you. They support you. You know someone is in the A category if you feel better about you after being with them. They add to your life, and they add to you. “B” people are neutral. You feel about the same after being with this person than you did before. The people on your “C” list really need to go into a circular file, to be released or phased out. Granted, that is not always possible. But these people are typically wet blankets that only drain you and add to stress to your life. “Add” or spend more time with A people. They will energize you, empower you, inspire you, and give your strength rather than stress!

## 4. **Just say “No”**

“Will you...?” “Can you...?” “I just need a small favor...” “We can always count on you.” “You’re so good at...” What happens when you hear these messages? Do you feel flattered, annoyed, or used? What do you think will happen if you say, “no?” Sometimes we say “yes” to things because we feel pressure to give an immediate answer. However, always remember you have the right to take some time to think about what you can reasonably do before responding. Being able to say “no” is a critical piece in reducing stress and balancing your life. It also gives your “yes’s” much more power!

## 5. Schedule time for yourself

If you don't take care of yourself, who will? If you don't take time and steps to preserve your health and well being, then who will? It is wonderful to have other people in our lives we can help, work with, and be friends with, and share activities with. However, you should be your own best friend first. I know you want your family and friends to have the best of you! It takes deliberate effort on your part to make that happen. Make it a priority to schedule the time and place for yourself to bring what gives you comfort, health, joy, peace of mind, or whatever you most need now. Be intentional in resting, in playing, in creating, in growing. Take at least 10 minutes a day to read, to walk, or to rest. Scheduling time for yourself is a must if you want the best of yourself ready to tackle your busy schedule.

## 6. Live with purpose!

A life oriented around an authentic and passionate purpose is one that is much easier to keep in balance. For this reason, there is no perfect, one-size-fits-all, balance plan you should be striving for. The best life balance plan is different for each of us because we all have different priorities and different lives. For more information on this tip, tune in to *More at Midday* on May 31<sup>st</sup>. "Having a Life Purpose" will be the focus.

The quote, "Life is a journey, not a destination" has much value in terms of reminding us about the value of maintaining a balanced life. There is no "last and final time" to clean our homes, care for our children or families, maintain our own health, or accomplish some goals. There will also be something we need to do, even after retirement, and this is a good thing! The pleasure is that we have a choice about how to live our lives, activities to be involved in, and people to be in relationships with. Be cognizant of the signs your life may be out of balance, and start taking steps today to regain your sense of control and life balance!

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends, and spirit – and you're keeping all these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends, and spirit are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.

*Brian Dyson, CEO of Coca Cola Enterprises from 1959-1994*

For information about counseling and other wellness programs available in Middle Tennessee, call Susan Gillpatrick, M.Ed., LPC, CTS at (615) 460-4445. Or to make an appointment for an assessment regarding your needs or concerns, call the Centerstone appointment line at (615) 460-4357.



### **About Centerstone**

Centerstone ([www.centerstone.org](http://www.centerstone.org)), celebrating 50 years of service in 2006, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. A not-for-profit organization, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Each year, the organization provides services to more than 45,000 individuals. The Centerstone network includes more than 60 facilities throughout the middle Tennessee region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

### **About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS**

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.