

Maplewood Psychology P.A.

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40 TOOLS AND TIPS FOR LIFE BALANCE

BALANCE BASICS

(Fundamental Principles of Balance)

1. *Believe balance is possible.* If you believe it is only a “nice idea,” you won’t do what it takes to get more of it. And believe it to the point of expectation because then and only then will your behavior change. When you expect it to rain, you carry an umbrella. When you expect company to come, you clean up. When you expect more balance in your life, you make different choices.
2. *Accept the fact that you cannot do everything that is available to you.* We have more options today in all aspects of our lives than ever before in history. That in itself is a wonderful fact; however, trying to act on and take advantage of them all can lead us straight to burn out.
3. *Ask yourself, “What’s important to me? What are my priorities in life?”* This is such a critical and essential component to gaining more balance in your life. If you’re clear about what’s most important and your priorities, it’s easier to make decisions as to how you will spend your time.
4. *Care and have courage enough to change your choices.* It’s not enough to want to have more balance; it requires taking some action, and often it will be actions others may not like. We’ve been there for them, and now you want to do something else with your time. This may not go over so big with everyone and will require courage on your part.
5. *Establish support systems both personally and professionally.* Use them! Internationally known motivational speaker, Les Brown, has often said, “Ask for help. Not because you’re weak, but because you want to remain strong!” There are many people willing to help you, and it is your job to find them and begin utilizing their services.

A JOURNEY WITHIN

(Spiritual Awareness, Growth and Direction)

6. *Get and keep things in perspective.* Take the time to look at what you already have vs. what you don’t have. It’s expressing what has been called “an attitude of gratitude.” Sometimes we cannot see the lush forest in our lives for looking at the one challenging tree that’s in our face. Step

back from the tree and realize this immediate issue or matter that is stressing you may not be as significant as it appears when you consider the big picture. Produce a new perspective.

7. *Recognize and tap into the creative and directing power of God.* Set aside at least 10 minutes of quiet time daily – preferably in the morning. The ideal place to do so is either outdoors or near a window looking outdoors where you are reminded of this power who created nature that is greater than you. Pray, meditate, ask for guidance, and listen. This is a really powerful source for countering stress and fostering balance. You see, how you start the day sets the tone for how the rest of the day will go.
8. *Capture your thoughts and feelings in a journal.* It's a great stress diffuser and helps you process your anxiety.
9. *Sing a song.* Sing lots of songs! Be sure the words are upbeat and encouraging and take advantage of the acoustics in the shower if you need them.
10. *Buy some fresh flowers for yourself – or someone else – or both.* It's amazing the power that flowers have on our spirit. Live plants can have the same effect.

BODY BASICS PLUS

(Physical Health, Nutrition and Fitness)

11. *Do some form of exercise everyday* even if it simply means walking an extra block or climbing an extra flight of stairs. Break a sweat. Be sure to alternate the exercise for variety and balance. You will enlist your team of endorphins to help you. Alternatively consider Tai Chi for an excellent mind body exercise.
12. *Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water daily.* This helps flush out impurities from your body and reduces excess water in your system...one of the quickest ways to lose weight.
13. *Get your required amount of sleep, at least three to four nights per week.* You'll handle everything better. There have been many reports lately about the importance of sleep as it relates to our overall health and the stress it puts on our system if we do not get an adequate amount. Research continues to suggest between 6 and 10 hours of sleep nightly.
14. *Get a massage!* Massage is an excellent way for men and women to dissipate stress. Consider an herbal wrap to detoxify your body.
15. *Practice deep breathing.* When you're under stress, your muscles tense, and your breathing becomes shallow and rapid. Deep and slow breathing is one of the simplest and best ways to stop the stress response. It really

helps you relax. Standing, sitting or lying down, breathe in slowly through your nostrils, hold for a moment, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Think of “breathing in” calm and “breathing out” stress. Think soft belly.

16. *Take a hot bubble bath*, preferably with bath salts, which helps detoxify your body and relax your muscles. Epsom salt does the same thing. At the very least take a steaming hot shower. Use a loofah body scrubber.

MIND OVER MATTER

(Mental Alertness and Clarity)

17. *Watch your mental diet*. Remember you are what you eat – mentally too! Boycott negative news. Guard your mind at the gatepost of what you see and hear that may contribute unnecessarily to your stress. Digest information that will help you relax, create balance and do your job better vs. things that will stress you more. Monitor and manage your self-talk.
18. *Remember that your thinking determines your destiny*. Change your thinking, change your life. Think calm. Think control. Think positive. Think peace. What has been proven to help are visuals, ie. pictures of your favorite place, a beach, mountains – whatever gives you a personal sense of peace or a mental picture of an optimistic outcome. Hold these visions as long and as frequently as possible.
19. *Help your overloaded mind by writing everything down in one location*. Trying to keep with multiple calendars and date books only adds to confusion and your stress.

COOL, CALM, AND CONFIDENT

(Emotional Wellness)

20. *Abandon the idea of perfection*. One challenge many people have with gaining and maintaining balance is trying to do everything – all at once – and trying to do it all perfectly. News Flash: Nothing and no one in the human race is perfect. Get over it. Abandon the idea of perfection. Simply do your best and release the rest.
21. *Laugh often. Find humor in situations*. Buy a joke book or go to a comedy club. It will do wonders to help release the tension and heaviness of emotional “stuff.”
22. *Have a release ceremony frequently*. Release negative thoughts and feelings about clients, college, family, and friends. Dragging that baggage around requires too much energy and causes too much stress. Write down all the things getting on your nerves – really think about them, decide to let them go, and then either tear that paper into small bits and burn it or flush it down the toilet. Release it. Let it go!

CREATING SPECIAL MOMENTS

(Relationships with Self, Family and Friends)

23. *Send a card to someone you know.* Isn't it a wonderful feeling when you receive a card in the mail instead of bills or marketing letters? When you make the effort to initiate this feeling for others, you can't help but feel good yourself. It's been said that you can't sprinkle fragrance on someone else without getting some on yourself. The feeling is priceless.
24. *Call an old friend.* Catch up on old times. There is never enough time in the day to do everything that is available and relationships that we say are important to us often get pushed to the back burner. Perhaps you can't do it everyday, but taking the time and making the effort to reconnect with special people adds a whole new dimension to the day-to-day stressors.
25. *Address, stamp, and file greeting cards in your personal file* for mailing at the appropriate time. This is just a smart and efficient way to stay on top of things and spread joy systematically. It works!
26. *Do not take for granted the things and people closest to your heart.* Cling to them as you would your life. For without them, life is meaningless. Show you care by what you say and do.

SATISFIED AND SOLVENT

(Meaningful Work and Financial Vitality)

27. *Be clear where you want to go but flexible on how you get there.* Being clear where we want to go is so fundamental to being able to make optimal decisions as to how we spend our time. However, it is also very important that we maintain some flexibility in our approach – being open to new and perhaps better ways of doing things. You must be willing to change in order to get better.
28. *Become debt free.* Live below your means. Money has always been a source of stress for many. And generally it's the feeling of not having enough that is at the root of most of it. It is said to be one of the leading causes of problems in relationships. Being debt free is truly a wonderful feeling, yet one that the average American never experiences. Our culture encourages us to "charge it" and "buy now and pay later," and we do. When you owe no one, your stress levels are greatly reduced and it allows you so many more options. And one of the fundamental ways to live without debt is to live below your means. Most of us live beyond our means and are just a paycheck away from being on the street. If you want to drastically reduce your stress, strive to be debt free.
29. *Consistently save.* This will make a significant difference in how you view your circumstances. Having money in the bank, no matter how small makes a big difference in your sense of security. Even if you earn a large

sum of money, there is a big difference in your stress level if you know you have something to fall back on if needed.

30. *Be a good steward of what you've been blessed with.* Use what you have wisely. Learn to provide yourself with a balanced sense of preparedness, astuteness, and security.

THE JOY OF GIVING

(Community Contribution and Service)

31. *Visit someone in the hospital or nursing home.* That will quickly put your challenges in perspective and will be a pick-me-up for them. Often we take for granted the simple ability to be in relatively good health and the ability to get around fairly easily.
32. *Give others a sense of contribution by having them help you.* Sometimes we think we are being considerate and strong by not asking for or letting others help. We're so independent. Of course, there is something to be said about being able to stand on your own; however, there is also something to be said about allowing others the opportunity to have the joy that comes from giving. When we never let others help us, we are prohibiting them from the satisfaction that is so rewarding. Let others help you.
33. *Help somebody and help yourself.* Do something for someone with no expectations of anything in return. Offer your professional skills, service and personal expertise for a local group who can't afford to pay you.
34. *Always under-promise and over-deliver.* It is less stressful and more rewarding when you deliver more than you promise. Keep this as your motto.

HOW TO RESCUE YOURSELF FROM TIME BANDITS

(Time/Event Management)

35. *Eliminate and delegate.* More times than not, all the things we say we need to do, we don't. Frequently reevaluate your to-do list. Ask yourself, "Do I really need to do this? What will happen if I don't do this?" Eliminate all unnecessary items. Then go back through that list and identify items that you can delegate to others. Which items must you do and which items can you delegate?
36. *Learn to say no.* Reevaluate your schedule and ask yourself, "Does this help me achieve my goals? Is this consistent with my priorities? Must I say yes to everything asked of me?" The answer is often "NO!" If it's inconsistent with your objective, say no – practice it! You may choose to offer an alternative explanation, or not, but in any event, begin to say no.

37. *Get organized* – your office, files, kitchen, closets, junk drawer...your life. You can find things easier and faster. Order results in less stress and does wonders for efficiently serving those depending on you.
38. *Be realistic when planning your time.* Plan, prioritize, and adjust. First, be sure to plan your day. If you don't have a plan, someone else will have one for you. Secondly, and this is really key, prioritize your list. You want to be focused on what's most important to you at any given time. Third, make your best estimate of how long it will take to complete each item. Now here's another important key – multiply your best estimate by 1.5 and set aside that amount of time in your scheduling. Take charge of your day.
39. *Prioritize and stay focused.* Remember the Pareto Principle, better known as the 80/20 rule – ie. 80% of your business comes from 20% of your efforts/customers. Focus on the important 20%. Don't forget to prioritize your priorities.
40. *Remove your name from miscellaneous mailing lists and e-mail lists.* Keep only the contacts that bring value to you and are worth your precious time. Every minute is indeed precious. Spend time on the things or people that bring you joy.

Know that you have what it takes to have more balance and less burn out in your life. It really comes down to a choice. Balance or burn out? Which do you choose?

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