

TIP 5: Balance Work and Life

Work–life balance requires us to consider how all the aspects of our lives are interconnected. What happens in our relationships affects our professional/career life and our health. What’s going on with our bodies affects our interactions with our friends. Money issues can make it difficult to work out relationship challenges or to have fun and relax.

Below you will find 12 domains of daily life to which we must all pay attention, to one degree or another. Using the form on the next page, I’d like you to start by giving each of those areas of life your subjective satisfaction rating. Zero “0” means “completely dissatisfied”; ten “10” means 100% satisfied. Choose any number between 0 and 10. As you give your rating, think about why you are giving that rating and what would make you 100% satisfied with that aspect of your life. Everybody’s satisfaction ratings are different. What bothers each of us and causes us to have lower ratings differs. What makes each of us happy differs. This is not an objective test. You cannot pass or fail it. Be as open and insightful as you can with yourself. What you are doing is the first step in raising your awareness about this area of work–life balance.

A few notes about what you might consider for each of the areas:

1. Health: Your energy and vitality, any health issues, diseases, warning signs, mobility issues that bother you, sleeping, etc.
2. Body: How you look, weight, hair, shape, etc.
3. Friends: Relationships with friends from all times and walks of your life, keeping in touch, college/high school, neighborhood?
4. Family: Relationships with your biological family members, extended and nuclear family, children, “friend-family,” responsibilities to/for family.
5. Personal growth: Activities you do to help you grow and develop, personal growth workshops, coaching, etc.
6. Spirituality: Any religious or spiritual practice, meditation, prayer, attending religious services, etc.
7. Rest and relaxation: What you do for fun that relaxes you, expresses you creatively, dancing, writing, walks in nature, vacations, art, etc.
8. Career: Job content, status, title, respect, work relationships, responsibilities, authority, meaning in work, etc.
9. Significant other: Time for romance, sensual/intimate activity, commitment, mutual trust and respect.
10. Finances: Do you have/earn enough money? Have a sense of financial freedom? Savings? Debts? Assets? Positive net worth? Know what any of this means?
11. Home: How you feel about your private space. Is your garage clear? Is your home decorated to be restorative? Comfortable? Does it reflect your taste?
12. Environment: Country, community, sunshine, seasons, diversity, your “sort” of people, surrounding aesthetics, city/urban/suburban, views, nature, etc. Might also include your company office space.

Step 1: Record your satisfaction level with each of these areas of your life in the “Rating” column. Note your reasons for that rating in the “Why?” column. Describe what would a 10 would look like for you in the “10 would be?” column.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE RATINGS TOOL #5

LIFE ARENA	RATING	WHY?	10 WOULD BE?
Health			
Body			
Friends			
Family			
Personal growth			
Spirituality/religion			
Rest, relax, rejuvenate			
Career			
Significant other/romance			
Finances			
Home			
Environment			

Step 2: Look at all the areas of your life and your ratings. What insights do you glean from looking at your satisfaction ratings? (You might want to share those insights with a friend or coach).

Step 3: Look at what would be a 10 for you. That is your ideal scene. What actions are you willing to take to get you to your 10?

Here are some resources that point to possible actions you might take for each of the areas where you have less than 10.

Step 4: As you read through the information, highlight actions you are willing to take to move you toward work–life balance.

Body: The most common reason for less than 10 is not being at your ideal body weight. The weight management industry has lots of suggestions for this.

- * Physical hunger
 - * Eat the right foods, right time, in the right portion
- * Emotional hunger
 - * Watch out when you're eating your feelings. Check by using the acronym HALT: Are you really . . .
 - * Hungry?
 - * Angry?
 - * Lonely?
 - * Tired?
- * Under stress adrenaline pours from the adrenal glands (hence the name), your heartbeat increases, you start to sweat, and your pupils dilate. With chronic stress you're like that all the time; eventually your body releases steroids that cause you to grow *omentum* (belly fat, to be ready for famine and a quick response).
- * Life energy comes from the sun—eat foods closest to that life (not processed) and with range of colors.
- * The Indian life science of Ayurveda says that we should eat the six tastes of life: sweet (milk, pears), salt, sour (citrus, yogurt, cherries), pungent (radishes, ginger, cinnamon), bitter (greens and yellows), and astringent (cause you to pucker up, like Asian mushrooms, figs, lentils, green or black tea).
- * Right times: Breakfast within hour of waking (after exercise); lunch 4 hours later; dinner around 7 (sunset), followed by constitutional walk.
- * Portion = size of palms; two-thirds full.

Friends: Pay to attention to who you hang out with, and cultivate your nourishing relationships. There's something called *social contagion*. We “catch” the emotions of the people around us. Social contagion is the transmission of ideas and emotions from one individual to another that increases in strength over time. We become the average of the five people we're closest to (emotionally, length of time, proximity). How nourishing are those relationships in your life?

Family: Families are simultaneously a source of strength and a source of wounds for many of us. The key is to have realistic expectations. Many a therapist's work is based on helping people deal with family issues. From a self-help perspective, if you want to explore what your beliefs and expectations of family are and bring them into reality, I suggest *The Work of Byron Katie*.²

Personal growth: Since growth activities are often important, but not urgent, it is your job to make time for those experiences. You can always listen to growth gurus using audio and video programs, or read some of the many self-help books available. I think an annual retreat is a great gift to yourself. Here are some links that offer these kinds of personal growth retreats:

- * retreatfinder.org
- * [Omega Institute—eomega.org](http://eomega.org)
- * [Insight meditation society—dharma.org](http://dharma.org)
- * [Spiritrock.org](http://spiritrock.org)
- * [Vipassana meditation—dhamma.org](http://dhamma.org)

Spirituality/Religion: Your spiritual or belief system can give your life a sense of intention/purpose/meaning. You must do what's meaningful to you.

Apart from any particular set of beliefs, most traditions agree that it is helpful to have an attitude of gratitude. Creating some practice in your life that allows you to focus on what you are grateful for and what is going well in your life can bring enormous inner satisfaction. For many young people I have worked with using the *Career by Design* process, the question "What do I believe?" can seem like an easy question. Usually they point to the teachings of their family's religion. But college is a time when beliefs can and should be put to the test. Beginning to understand religion for themselves and coming up with their own religious practice and ideology is a process through which many students go. In the Values Inventory you saw variations on religious/spiritual values you could choose. Here are some key words to consider as you think your rating for religion/spirituality that may be helpful.

Dogma is the established belief or doctrine held by a religion, or by extension by some other group or organization. It is authoritative and not to be disputed, doubted, or diverged from, by the practitioner or believers.

Praxis is the practice of faith, especially worship.

Religious means relating to or manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity.

² The last Appendix in this book provides an introduction to *The Work of Byron Katie*. If you decide to explore her methods, I suggest starting by watching the free online videos on www.TheWork.Com or listening to the audio CD version of *Loving What Is*. In the video and audio you can hear her tone-of-voice and that is important for appreciating her approach.

It may be that you are interested in the dogma of a particular religion, or not. You may find yourself attracted to the practices of a particular religious or spiritual path. Maybe you are not religious or devotional at all, but you do have a spiritual side. For some people the quest³ for the meaning of life is what they rate.

Rest, relaxation, rejuvenation: Remember the 20 Things You Love To Do exercise in the Motivating Interests chapter of this workbook? Pick something from that list and do it weekly, if not more often.

Career: This entire workbook is strategies for having a career that is a 10!

Romance/significant other: The book by Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* (and all the subsequent books in his series), starts from the premise that we all have a primary and secondary preferred love language, and that we respond (believe we are loved) when our significant others “speak” to us in one of those two preferred languages. The 5 “languages” are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

Problems occur when we speak our love language to our significant others, but their love language is not the same as ours. In short, when we use the golden rule in love relationships—which looks like loving them the way *we* want to be loved—we miss the mark. We need to use the platinum rule: love them the way *they* want to be loved.

Some people may crave focused attention; others need regular praise. Gifts are highly important to one person, whereas another sees fixing a leaky faucet, ironing a shirt, or cooking a meal as filling his or her “love tank.” Some partners might find that physical touch makes them feel valued: holding hands, giving back rubs, and sexual contact.

Gary Chapman describes why a person who does yard work, dishes, car maintenance (Acts of Service), etc., is floored when the significant other says, “You never show me you love me. You never cuddle with me, or caress my hair, or make the first move for sex” (Physical Touch). Or, “Why don’t you spend time with me? Why do you work so much?” (Quality Time). And, “Why don’t you buy me flowers? Why don’t you ever get me cards or balloons . . . just because?” (Gifts) Or “You never tell me what I mean to you. Why don’t you ever share with me what I mean to you, or what my good qualities are?” (Words of Affirmation).

His books help you figure out what *your* languages are and what *their* languages are. Sometimes you have a clue to your preferred languages by noticing what you complain about most in your relationships. The books also contain questionnaires. The concern some people have with Chapman’s books is that they have a strong Christian and

³ See Quest spiritual orientation in Values Inventory.

heterosexual bias. That can be comfortable and affirming for people with those beliefs, values, and lifestyle—but quite off-putting for people who do not. I think this is a helpful framework, but because I work to be as respectfully inclusive as possible, I share that caveat along with my recommendation.

Finances: The most common issue for people who have low satisfaction scores in this arena is the desire to move from debt to financial freedom. Of course, you need to get support from licensed professionals in this area. I can recommend the following:

- Book: *Your Money or Your Life: 9 Steps to Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence*—revised and updated for the 21st century by Vicki Robin. Many people are surprised to discover the hidden costs of certain work situations. And of course her approach is consistent with using motivating interests, strengths, and skills effectively. It is in the line of another good book *Do What You Love and the Money Will Follow*.⁴
- Website, TV shows, books, workshops, and programs by Suze Orman. Millions of people find her approach helpful.
- Weekend workshop: Millionaire Mind Intensive by T. Harv Ecker includes a lot of activities that help you examine your emotions and beliefs about money. Be careful not to spend a lot of money buying all the products sold at the workshops, however.

Home: I think of the home as an outer structure reflecting your inner realities. Does your home feel like *home*? Reflect you? What does the architecture and design of your home say about you and your family? How are the entry, movement, key rooms, cleanliness and usability of the basement/attics? Is your home welcoming, passable, cluttered, etc.?

To get some suggestions for your 10 home, consider:

- Feng Shui—an ancient Chinese system of aesthetics designed to harmonize energy in physical structures.
- Cable TV design shows
- Organizational consultant assistance to eliminate clutter.

Environment: I talked about space in the mission statement chapter. Other environmental factors include sustainability and community. One thing I will say is that most emergency help comes from your neighbors, not emergency techs. Choose a community where you feel comfortable and engage in community activity. Get to know your neighbors, and be a good neighbor.

⁴ *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow: Discovering Your Right Livelihood* by Marsha Sinetar

TIP 6: Make Time for Your Priorities

In his very famous book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey shares a matrix for the third habit, putting First Things First.

PRIORITY MATRIX—FIRST THINGS FIRST

	URGENT TO YOU	NOT URGENT	
IMPORTANT	1. HIGH-PRIORITY QUADRANT	2. QUADRANT OF QUALITY	IMPORTANT
	<p>URGENT & IMPORTANT TO YOU</p> <p>Performance review-based crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven projects, key meetings, prep for important presentations</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">1</p>	<p>NOT URGENT, BUT IMPORTANT TO YOU</p> <p>Life balance, prep, problem prevention activities, values-based work, planning, growth, relationships, recreation</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">2</p>	
NOT IMPORTANT	3. QUADRANT OF DECEPTION	4. QUADRANT OF WASTE	NOT IMPORTANT
	<p>URGENT BUT NOT IMPORTANT TO YOU</p> <p>Interruptions, some calls, email, reports, meetings, many popular busyness activities that are important to other people</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>NOT URGENT, NOT IMPORTANT TO YOU</p> <p>Trivia, busywork, some phone calls, time wasters, escape activities</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">4</p>	
	URGENT TO OTHERS	NOT URGENT	

Step 1: Assess where you are and where what you are doing fits. Think about the activities in your days and see where those activities fit in the First Things First Matrix. How much time is spent in the all-important quadrants 1 and 2 versus the unimportant (to you) quadrants 3 and 4.

Step 2: Reframe time management now as **Time Mastery**. Time Mastery is about priorities, not about time. We all have the same amount of time. Time Mastery is using the time we have to do activities consistent with our work–life–values priorities. You decide what you want your life to look like and then do the right things to get you there.

When people say they don't have enough time to do what they need to do, they could have any number of reasons for saying that. Here are some of them. Put a checkmark next to any that sound like you.

- Not sure of your priorities, goals, values
- You focus more on what you don't want, rather than on what you do want
- You have no plan, you act randomly (in the moment)
- You lack consistency or discipline
- You feel demotivated
- You feel like a victim—you *have* to do this or that
- You are easily distracted
- You are a people pleaser
- You have too many activities
- You tend to avoid conflict (you need to push back, negotiate, set boundaries, or manage conflict)

One way to become a time master is to budget time in ways similar to how you would do financial budgeting. To do financial budgeting, you would total up money you make, note all your expenses, and allocate the money you have to pay the expenses. If you run short for a bill, you must “take” money from somewhere else or go into debt. So you can use a similar process for assessing your time situation:

- * Total up the hours in a day (24)
- * Make a list of the activities you want to accomplish in a day
- * Divide up your activities among your 24 hours
- * If there isn't enough time to cover one of your activities, choose:
 1. to “steal time” from one of your other activities
 2. to figure out how to streamline activities so they take less time
 3. to leverage—go for activities that affect multiple goals
 4. to get someone else to do the activity for you
 5. to drop the activity
 6. to stay stressed out (go into psychological debt)

The sixth option is not one people are consciously choosing, but by not making a choice consciously, they *are* living with the psychological and physical impact of that conscious non-choice/unconscious choice.

The second thing to do is to make structure your friend. I'm going to show you a scheduling matrix you can use as a supportive structure to help you. But don't schedule so tightly that you feel like you're in a time prison. Let the structure support you while giving you freedom within your time boundaries. Balance scheduled time with free time.

For instance, I use the Time Mastery Scheduling Matrix for activities 5½ days a week. Saturday afternoons and Sundays are unscheduled days in my week. I actively refrain from scheduling any activities there so that I have free, unstructured, unscheduled time to do what I want to do. During the other days of the week I work, admittedly some long hours at times. And I have some "me" time scheduled during those days too. The benefit of the nonscheduled time is to give space without the pressure of the clock.

Avoid a couple of common pitfalls. I've noticed in my life that when I focus on what the clock says, versus what I need to do, I feel stressed. It's not really the clock that's stressing me out, but *my beliefs* about not having enough time or not controlling my time that's stressing me out. I am always choosing what to do with my time. As are you. You are always choosing; you can choose with victim language or you can choose in a way that empowers you. Blaming time for your stress is a handy way to avoid being responsible for your choices. It's also self-sabotaging. Some choices/priorities might require patience, sacrifice, negotiation, or creativity—but they can be managed.

Personally, I don't waste time on calendars, phone systems, planners, coaches, etc., when it comes to time management. They often take more time to set up and update than it would take to do activities that are important to me. I know many people swear by them and think they work. If you're one of those, please do continue to use them (but then if they're working you're probably not reading this section). What I've noticed is that the planners don't change bad habits of reacting to other people's needs as if they were more important than your own.

Step 3: Think of your roles and goals. When you decide what to put in your important quadrants 1 and 2, think about what kind of person you want to be. Where do you want to make a difference? A contribution? How do you want to be known or remembered? What kind of legacy do you want to leave? The answers to these questions reveal your true priorities. What roles do you have where you live out your priorities? Roles are who you are; activities are what you do in your roles. Roles can be chosen by you or given to you. Roles typically change across the lifespan, and we must adjust to those changes in roles. You don't have to explain why the roles are important, but it helps to think about why they are important to you. Role #1 is SELF. Self is included because you can only help others and achieve your goals if you are take care of yourself. Set goals for each role. What kind of person/spouse/parent/boss, etc., do you want to be? Answering these questions will reveal your life goals. Prioritize those roles and goals. You start to recognize role priorities by pondering "What would I spend my time doing if I had only 2 years to live? Where would I want to make the most progress? See the most gain? Invest the most time?" This is not a bucket list of activities, but *meaningful* priorities for you.

Step 4: Break your goals down into bite-size chunks of regular activities. Small wins are the habit of major achievers. Progress toward your goals is the most motivating thing there is. Think of three to five appropriate activities for each of your roles. Choose daily activities that “fit” who you want to be. “What can I do as a ‘role,’ on a daily or weekly (regular) basis, that will move me toward being [description of goal for role]? For example: What can I do as a parent, on a daily or weekly basis, that will move me toward being present, helpful, encouraging, supportive, and gracious? Make these activities SMARTER—Specific, Measured, Achievable, Realistic, Timed, Enjoyable, and positively Reinforced (for you and them). SELF activities should include sleep, exercise, alone time (especially if your personality is introverted), relaxation, and recreation.

Step 5: Check your activities against your priorities and list them in the **Time Mastery Scheduling Matrix** below by priority.

TIME MASTERY SCHEDULING MATRIX TOOL #6

Non-Negotiable and Fixed	Negotiable and Fixed
Non-Negotiable and Flexible	Negotiable and Flexible

Non-negotiable activities are based on your priorities; they are activities you cannot or are completely unwilling to give up. These should not get squeezed out by busyness and others’ priorities. Sleep should be a non-negotiable activity (so to speak).

Negotiables are lower-priority activities. You’d like to keep doing them, but you will modify or drop them if absolutely necessary.

Fixed means that the time to do this activity is determined by someone else and you can’t change it.

Flexible means that you determine the time you do the activity.

Step 6: Get out your calendar and use the matrix to make your schedule for next week. Start with the non-negotiable, fixed activities, since you know when they have to go into your schedule.

Then add the non-negotiable flexible activities. Choose times that work for you for those activities based on your energy patterns. Choose to do things that are important during the parts of your energy cycle where you have the most energy, the best attention and focus.

Next schedule negotiable and fixed activities. This is tricky because it looks like you may have to do this activity at a time set by someone else. The negotiable part trumps the fixed part, however. You can decide not to do that activity, leverage your time by doing something else that is from your non-negotiable side too, or push back (negotiate) to do the activity at a better time for you.

Finally, if you have time left over, add the negotiable, flexible activities to your schedule.

Psychologically, the hardest part of this process is to own that you're in control of most of your time (all of it, really). And so you have to choose what to cut when all the activities you have listed will not fit into your schedule.

Don't put, or allow anyone else to put, something on your schedule just because there's room. *Decide what goes on your schedule based on your priorities.*