

Balance or Harmony

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We are all looking for a model in which to live our lives. We look to celebrities and spiritual texts to try to use as role models. We seek out gurus, plough through grocery store magazines and attend new-age conferences all in an attempt to have a life plan in which to guide us.

One common life plan is to seek "balance." Seeking balance is often heard in television talk shows, religious sermons on the pulpit and from celebrity food gurus. This life plan has caught on and seems to be a primary philosophy for many. We throw the term "balance" around as if it is as common as apple pie and hot dogs. The attainment of balance might cross over a variety of categories from diet to exercise and from work to rest. It seems that no avenue in our lives is withheld from our search for balance.

Maybe, just maybe, the search for balance in our lives is a disjointed model and something that we should not be looking for after all. Seeking balance might be a "false prophet" that has crept in with silent momentum and we now tend to believe it without questioning its real intentions. It seems that there are many delusions and inconsistencies when seeking balance that go altogether ignored. One could conceivably say that seeking balance might not be a healthy model after all.

Instead, what we should be seeking in our lives is "Harmony" and not "Balance." These two terms are not the same and can be polar opposites.

Balance is a term that refers to finding enough behaviors and actions that counteract each other. Balance is often struggling between the world of angels and the world of the devil, between success and sabotage. For instance, someone living in balance might be a devoted spiritual seeker. He meditates regularly, reads spiritual texts and attends group retreats frequently to help him deepen his spiritual practice. This person might also be an alcoholic. After his weekly evening meditation practice he goes out with several others from his meditation group and gets drunk, loses control with alcohol, makes a scene at the restaurant and cannot drive himself home because he is so intoxicated. This individual has a life plan of balance but certainly not of harmony.

An avid workout athlete spends hours and hours at the gym perfecting her body and training. She runs to get herself in optimal cardiovascular fitness, lifts weights, takes exercise classes and is a champion triathlete. She is also a food addict. She works out like crazy because she cannot stop eating. She uses food and exercise to suppress her emotions. She bounces back and forth between over-

consumption of food to anorexia. She lives a life of balance but is certainly not in harmony.

Another individual is a bodybuilder who lifts weights six days a week and hardens his body. He has a masterful physique and would put anyone to shame at the beach with his shirt off. He spends one day a week taking a yoga class but still cannot understand why he is so stiff and cannot ever touch his toes. He believes that by taking one yoga class a week along with his many hours of strength training that he is living a life of balance. Maybe so, but he is not living a life of harmony. Hardness and flexibility are in direct contrast with each other

Balance is drinking diet sodas all day long then ending your day with a glass of fresh squeezed carrot juice. The belief is that carrot juice will balance off the damage created by drinking all of the diet soda. Balance is being on a diet two days a week and then binging on food the other five days a week. When it comes to food, balance is often a common theme. Someone might believe that he is in balance if he is a vegetarian three days a week and then a meat eater the other four days. In his mind the three days of no meat balance off the four days of eating meat.

Someone might feel in balance by living a life as a staunch animal rights' activist. She does not eat meat and protests regularly against animal cruelty. Yet when she goes off to work she leaves her pets in her house locked up or in a cage. She tells her dogs and cats when and where they can eat, sleep, go to the bathroom and when they can make noise. To her, this is a balanced life but it might not be a harmonious life.

A career as a member of the Sicilian Mafia might be balanced off by being a loyal member of the Catholic Church. This man attends mass on Sundays and all of the holy days. He observes the rituals and the tradition of the Catholic Church while working for an organization that is famous for its extortion, racketeering, crime and abuse. This individual believes that he is leading a life of balance.

A life of balance might mean that you are actively involved in community and world events. You donate money to charities that support non-violent causes and animal rights. You support institutions that promote peace and environmental integrity. Yet when you look at your investment portfolio you have invested in many of those same companies that you are protesting against. You believe that you are in balance but you are most certainly not in harmony.

Balance is a quest for opposites. You have an extreme action on one side and you hope to counteract it on the other side. You mistakenly believe that when you mix fire and ice that everything will work out okay.

Living a life of harmony means that you have a clear path or direction that you are following. You take action on your beliefs and lead your life with complete congruence with what you believe. You

are willing to be an "outlier" if that is what your beliefs tell you. You have conviction and complete faith in the direction you are heading.

For instance, harmony would be for a vegetarian to never even consider eating meat. A convicted yoga practitioner would find it ridiculous to work out at the gym to harden her body. A conscious earth supporter would not have any investments in companies that do harm to the earth, produce pharmaceutical drugs or create war products.

Harmony is about a flow in a particular direction without being confused about where you are headed. This does not necessarily mean that your flow is always a straight line and never wavers. For instance, someone who is in harmony with her diet might from time to time have a sweet or a dessert. She understands that this is outside of her normal routine. Her flow continues with the same core values and is not based in extremism.

Nature teaches us how to be in harmony with life. This is about understanding the flow of the seasons, participating in our emotional world and resting when called for. Leading a harmonious life is about being dedicated to your purpose, honoring your internal beliefs and letting go to flow down the stream of life.

Is it not time to dismantle the ideology of balance? Leading a life of balance is not what it seems. When you engage in a life of harmony you are more aligned with your true purpose and with the flow of nature.