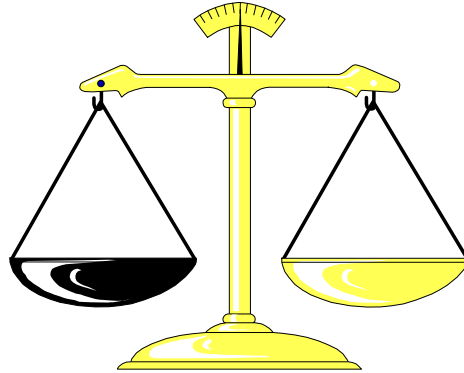


# FINDING BALANCE IN OUR LIVES



## **GOALS:**

- To identify areas of imbalance in our lives.
- To learn the three point balance technique.
- To recognize our opportunities for serendipity.

## **RATIONALE:**

Most of us find ourselves juggling our time between things we would like to do and things we have to do. The latter is often the winner. This lesson will help us develop some techniques for achieving both.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Flipchart, markers, paper, pencils; copies for each participant of *Balance Planner* and *Personal Prescriptions*.

## **METHOD:**

### **Warm up 1: My Needs**

In round robin fashion, ask each participant to complete the following statement:

"What I really need in my life right now is more . . ."

Flipchart responses.

Note: Ask participants to be specific. For example, instead of "more time", say "more time for myself".

## **Warm up 2: Signs of Imbalance**

In the large group, ask participants to brainstorm some signs and symptoms that indicate that their lives are not in balance, for example, forgetfulness, irritability, feelings of guilt, health problems (headaches, backaches, stomach ailments), sleep problems, procrastination, feeling overwhelmed, feeling pressured and out of control, preoccupation, distraction.

## **Exercise 1: Priorities**

List the following areas of life on the flipchart and ask participants to prioritize them in order of their importance for them.

Community: (volunteer work, relationships, politics)

Work: (career, volunteer, school)

Family: (friends, relationships)

Self: (inner self, beliefs, personal development)

Leisure: (recreation, fun)

Tell participants to prioritize them on the basis of time spent in each area.

Encourage sharing the results of each list in dyads.

### **Questions to consider:**

- How did your lists compare?
- What do they tell you about the way you spend your time and set your priorities?

**Theory:** See Theory Box

## **Exercise 2: Planning for Balance**

Distribute copies of the *Balance Planner*. Ask participants to:

- Choose three important things to do tomorrow, one in each of the areas of Family, Work and Self.
- Write them at the top of the *Balance Planner*. (These have now become the priorities for tomorrow.)
- Complete their TO DO list of those things they feel have to be done.

Some of these things will get done. Some may be postponed if an event of *serendipity* occurs. Record the latter on the *Balance Planner* after it occurs. Reflect on the importance of the item on the TO DO list that was replaced by serendipity.

## **Exercise 3: Stimulating Serendipity: Taking Time To Smell The Roses**

Divide participants into small groups. Invite them to share a time when they experienced *serendipity*. Explain that these are moments when we digress from whatever we are doing, to see or experience something else. The important point is that a choice is made.

Some examples include:

- A child comes home from school upset. You put aside your work to talk to him and are rewarded with a feeling of closeness.
- You are stuck in traffic. Instead of getting tense, you amuse yourself with looking at funny licence plates, noticing what others are doing in their cars, admiring a beautiful tree or garden.

## **Closer:**

Hand out *Personal Prescription* forms to participants to fill out for themselves. Encourage sharing these within the group.

## **EVALUATION:**

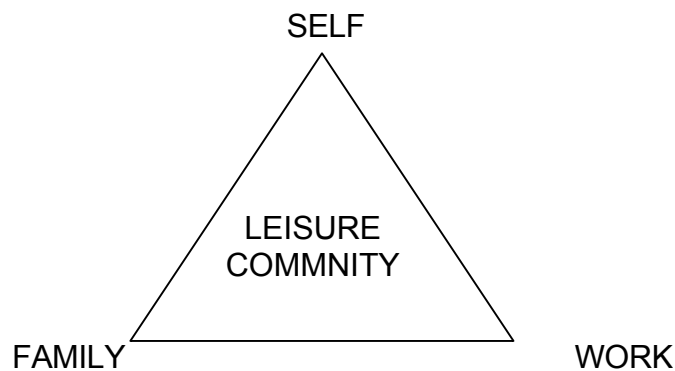
## THEORY BOX

Do we live to work or work to live? Are we so busy 'getting there' that we don't stop to enjoy the trip?

Two concepts will be discussed here. One is the 3 point Balance system, and the other is the concept of *serendipity*. Both concepts are derived from the book **LifeBalance** by Linda and Richard Eyre.

If we look at the areas of self, family and work as being most important to us, then it follows that we need to set priorities in each of these areas. These can be illustrated by using the model of an equilateral triangle.

A triangle has a firm base, which supports the sides and keeps the triangle in balance. If you put it on any side, the balance is still maintained.



As each corner of the triangle supports the other sides and provides balance, so do the areas of our lives.

We develop our sense of self and self-worth through our work and families. We work in order to provide support for families and for self-fulfilment.

In families we are taught the importance of work, achievement and personal development.

If we take the time to set priorities around the things that are most important to us (including ourselves) then we take the first step to putting things in balance. We often put ourselves at the bottom of the list resulting in frustration in never having the time for personal things.

## THEORY BOX (Continued)

Priorities set on a daily basis around self, family and work will ensure that there is time for things we choose. The things that we have to do will always be there. It is easier to cope with them when you know you are also going to do something that you want to do. See *Balance Planner*.

The second concept is that of **serendipity**. The word was coined by Sir Horace Walpole in 1754. According to Funk and Wagnall, *serendipity* is defined as "the faculty of happening upon fortunate discoveries when not in search of them".

To find *serendipity*, two things must occur:

- 1) you need to have a direction or goal in mind;
- 2) you require an awareness of the world around you.

Serendipity allows you to be able to 'smell the roses' or encounter a wonderful experience while in pursuit of something else.

Not only do we need to make things that are important a priority, but we need to allow flexibility in our daily routine to seek out or take advantage of moments of serendipity. By doing these things, one begins to attain a sense of balance.

### **REFERENCES:**

Eyre, Linda and Richard. ***LifeBalance***. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.

# BALANCE PLANNER

DAILY PRIORITIES THAT I CHOOSE

1. SELF
2. FAMILY
3. WORK

TO DO

SERENDIPITY

**R<sub>x</sub>**

**PERSONAL PRESCRIPTION**

**I HEREBY PRESCRIBE FOR MYSELF  
THE CHALLENGE OF DOING SOMETHING  
DIFFERENTLY TO BRING MORE BALANCE OR  
TO RESTORE BALANCE IN MY LIFE.**

**I WILL**

---

**SIGNATURE**