



## ***A Balanced Life***

**by Brian Tracy**

According to psychologist Sidney Jourard, fully 85 percent of your happiness in life will come from your personal relationships. Your interactions and the time that you spend with the people you care about will be the major source of the pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction that you derive daily. The other 15 percent of your happiness will come from your accomplishments. Unfortunately, many people lose sight of what is truly important, and they allow the tail to wag the dog. They sacrifice their relationships, their major source of happiness, to accomplish more in their careers. But one's career, at best, can be only a minor source and a temporary one, at that of the happiness and satisfaction that everyone wants.

There is no perfect answer to the key question of how to achieve balance in our lives, but there are a number of ideas that can help you to be and have and do more in the areas that are important to you. These ideas often require changes and modifications in the way you think and use your time, but the price is well worth it. You will find that by reorganizing your life in little ways, you can create an existence that gives you the highest quality and quantity of satisfaction overall. And this must be your guiding purpose. The ancient Greeks had two famous sayings: "Man, know thyself" and "Moderation in all things." Taken together, those two ideas are a good starting point for achieving the balance that you desire. With regard to knowing thyself, it is very important to give some serious thought to what you really value in life. All trade-offs and choices are based on your values, and all stress and unhappiness come from believing and valuing one thing and, yet, finding yourself doing another. Only when your values and your activities are congruent do you feel happy and at peace with yourself.

So knowing yourself means knowing what you really value, knowing what is really important to you. The superior man or woman decides what is right before he or she decides what is possible. The advanced human being organizes his or her life to assure that everything that he or she is doing is consistent with his or her true values. It is essential for you to organize your life around yourself, rather than to organize yourself around the demands of your external world.

The second quote, "Moderation in all things," is a wonderful and important dictate for successful living. But, at the same time, you know that you can't really be successful in any area by being moderate in that area. Peter Drucker once wrote, "Wherever you find something getting done, you find a monomaniac with a mission." You know that single-minded concentration on a goal or objective is absolutely necessary for achievement of any kind in a competitive society.

So what's the solution? Over the years, I have worked with tens of thousands of men and women who have spent a lot of time and effort struggling to achieve balance in their lives. I have found that there is a simple formula; it is simple in that it is easy to explain, but you need tremendous self-discipline and persistence to implement it in your life.

The formula revolves around a concept of time management, or what you might want to call life management. Time management is really a form of personal management in which you organize your 24 hours a day in such a way that they give you the greatest possible return of happiness and contentment.

The key to time management, after you have determined your values and the goals that are in harmony with those values, is to set both priorities and posteriorities. The importance of setting priorities is obvious. You make a list of all the things that you can possibly do and then select from that list the things that are most important to you based on everything you know about yourself, about others and about your responsibilities. The setting of posteriorities is often overlooked. It is when you carefully decide which things you are going to stop doing so that you will have enough time to start doing something else.

The greatest single shortage we experience in America today is that of time. We suffer from what has been called "time poverty." Men and women everywhere feel that their biggest single challenge is that they simply do not have enough time to do all the things that they have to do or want to do. People today feel pressured from all sides and are under an inordinate amount of stress. They feel overworked, fatigued and incapable of fulfilling all the responsibilities that they have taken on.

The starting point to alleviate this time poverty is to stop and think. Most people are so busy rushing back and forth that they seldom take the time to think seriously about who they are and why they are doing what they are doing. They engage in frantic activity, instead of thoughtful analysis. They get so busy climbing the ladder of success that they lose sight of the fact that the ladder may be leaning against the wrong building.

When my wife, Barbara, and I started our family, we were faced with a common dilemma: how can we balance the demands of work and home with the finite amount of time we are all given?

Here's the answer I discovered: The key to success in a busy society is to devote your time to only two areas during the period of time when your family needs you, when your children are between the ages of birth to about 18 to 20 years. During this period of time, you need to curtail virtually all of your outside activities. You need to focus on two major areas your family and your career as I have done over the years. You need to place your family's needs above all else and then organize your work schedule so that you can satisfy those needs on a regular basis. Then, when you work, you must concentrate single-mindedly on doing an excellent job.

Most people are time wasters. They waste their own time, and they waste your time as well. To be successful and happy, you must discipline yourself to work all the time you work. The average employee works at about 50 percent of capacity. Fully 80 percent of people working today are underemployed in that their jobs do not really demand their full capacities. Only 5 percent of workers surveyed recently felt that they were working at the outside limits of their potentials.

But this is not for you. You must resolve to work all the time you work. You must decide that from the time you start in the morning until the time you finish in the evening, you will work 100 percent of the time. Even if no one is watching you, you should be aware that everyone is watching you. Everybody knows everything. In every company, everyone knows who is working and who is not. Your job must be to work all the time you work. If people come by and want to chat, you simply smile at them and say, "Could we talk about this later?" Tell them that you have to get back to work.

Have a written list, and work on your list every day. Write down everything as it comes up, and add it to your list. Set priorities on your time, and be certain that you are working on the things that are most important to your boss and to your company. Refuse to get drawn into the time-wasting activities of the people around you. Work all the time you work.

Remember that to be successful, you must become a monomaniac with a mission. This is true today, and it has always been true in our competitive society. To be successful at your job, you must work fast and efficiently and nonstop all the time you are on the payroll. You must become an expert at time management. You must become so efficient and effective that you get twice as much done as anyone else. In this way, you will advance your career at the fastest rate possible, and you will also be on top of your job most of the time, and it will be unnecessary for you to take work home for the evenings and weekends.

Then, when you have finished your work, you can devote your full attention to your family and to the other important people in your life. The Bible says, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." One of the meanings of this is that if you are thinking about your work while you are with your family, or if you are thinking about your family when you are at work, you end up accomplishing far less in each area. However, if you are on top of your work, when you come home you can devote yourself single-mindedly again, like a monomaniac to your relationships and to enhancing the quality of your interactions with the most important people in your life.

The key to a happy family life is communication. And it is not quality of time but quantity of time that counts. Quality moments those little moments that are precious and important come unbidden and, usually, unexpectedly. They arise during the process of spending a large quantity of uninterrupted time with one or more people. You cannot dictate those moments in advance. You cannot decide to have quality time. You do not go to it. It comes to you.

There are a variety of ways to extract the greatest amount of quality and happiness from your relationships with the members of your family. Perhaps the most important is to spend unbroken time with your spouse on a daily basis. Of course, you should spend time together talking after the children have gone to bed, but you should also seek out and utilize small segments of time during the morning and early evening during which you can communicate and interact. One of the most important things that couples can do is spend the first 30 to 60 minutes after work debriefing each other and discussing the day's activities.

Your children also have a tremendous need to communicate with you. In fact, in my research on how to raise super kids, I found that the one factor that was more important than any other was the amount of one-on-one time that the parents spent with the children. When parents don't spend a lot of time with their children individually, they send a message to their children that they are not very valuable or important. Children then react by experiencing feelings of inferiority, lowered self-esteem, and negative self-images, and this is expressed in poor grades and behavioral problems. But when the parents take the time to sit down with their children and ask questions and listen to what is going on in their minds, the children tend to feel a deep sense of value and importance that is manifested in self-confidence, happiness, and good relationships with others.

The key is learning to use your time better. You cannot get more hours out of each day, but you can put more of yourself into each of those hours. Turn off the television and spend time talking with the members of your family. Never read newspaper or books when a member of your family wants to communicate with you. Put the reading material aside. Concentrate single-mindedly on the most important people in your world. Everything else can wait.

In regard to your work and family, continually ask yourself, "What is the most valuable use of my time right now?" Consider if what you are doing today will matter a week or a year from today. Sometimes, we become preoccupied with small things that are not really important in the long run. But what is important in the long run is the quality of our home life.

You don't have to be a superman or superwoman to properly balance the demands of your work and the needs of your family. You must, however, be more thoughtful, be a better planner, use your time more effectively, and continually think of ways to enhance the quality of your life in both areas. If you set this as a goal and resolve to work toward it every day, you will gradually become far more efficient, far more effective, and a far happier human being. And that's the most important thing of all.

**About the author:**

**Brian Tracy** has been empowering business and sales professionals by sharing his knowledge all over the world. His techniques will allow you to reach your goals and achieve the unthinkable. Brian, a former Edmontonian, has graciously allowed us to access and share from his vast wisdom and experience.

Please visit Brian's website and invest in yourself by adding some of his value-added books and other programs to your success library. Visit: [www.BrianTracy.com](http://www.BrianTracy.com)