



BALANCING ACT

THE ART OF LIVING OUT DESIRED PRIORITIES

CHECK YOURSELF OUT

On a scale of one to 10, what value do you place on the following areas:

- Diet _____
- Exercise _____
- Continuing Education _____
- Family _____
- Romance _____
- Entertainment _____
- Spiritual development _____
- Work _____
- Financial development _____
- Career development _____
- Dress _____
- Hygiene _____
- Hobbies _____

BALANCE

"A harmonious or satisfying arrangement or proportion of parts or elements, as in a design or composition."

"—strike a balance. To reach or achieve a state or position between extremes."

—The American Heritage Dictionary, ed. William Morris (Boston: Houghton Merlin Company, 1976), pp. 100, 101.

THINK ABOUT IT

For balance to occur weight must be properly distributed. If it is not distributed properly, the object crashes because of the natural pull on the object. In a practical sense, this is true about life. If our life activities are out of balance, it is difficult to keep our life in working order. This leads to frustration and difficulties.

Life is a Circus

THE NEED FOR BALANCE



DISCUSS

If you could focus on only one or two of these areas, which would it be? Why?

AT THE TOP

"[Pete] Sampras turned pro at 16, [Sampras] is No. 1 in the world but has been received coolly by the public. . . . Sampras' existence thus far has been solitary. 'It's one regret I might have,' Sampras says of leaving high school. 'Going to school is part of growing up, developing. . . .' He pauses. 'Also, I might have a good friend. You know, I don't have a really good friend.' "

—Sally Jenkins, "The Sorry State of Tennis," Sports Illustrated, 9 May 1994, p. 78.



DISCUSS

What difficulties or frustrations are you aware of when balance is not achieved in your own life?



Walking the Tight Rope

TAKING CONTROL VS. BEING CONTROLLED



TO DO OR NOT TO DO

How accurately does your schedule of activities reflect what you value?
Why or why not?

EFFICIENCY VS. EFFECTIVENESS

"[O]ne day in my early 30's, I verged on burnout, if not breakdown. Organization wasn't the answer, because I knew I couldn't get more organized. In figuring out my problem, I made a startling discovery: I had majored in efficiency at the cost of effectiveness. Organization had become an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

Efficiency, I heard someone explain, is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things."

—Sybil Stanton, *Worldwide Challenge* (January/February 1989), p. 24. Stanton is the author of *The 25-Hour Woman*.



DISCUSS

What does it look like when you are more concerned with doing things right rather than doing the right thing?

FROM EXPERIENCE

"When I live life out of balance, I experience burnout, weariness, and frustration with demands on me. I do not sleep well, and I feel like what I am doing does not really matter. I think it affects my family. I see them as a burden rather than a blessing, because the important things are not the focus of my attention." —44-year-old professional counselor

Knowing Up From Down

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIORITIES

"When I let my priorities get jumbled, I feel frustrated, work ineffectively and feel out of sync with myself and others."

—Consultant

"I get extremely stressed out when I lose sight of my priorities, because I don't know what to do first, and I feel very confused."

—Attorney

THE TYRANT

"We live in a constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that many important tasks need to be done today, or even this week...But often urgent, though less important, tasks call for immediate response — endless demands pressure every waking hour...With a sense of loss we recall the important tasks that have been shunted aside. We realize that we've become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent."

—Charles Hummel, *Tyranny of the Urgent!* (DownersGrove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1994), pp. 5, 6

marshmallows when I get back. And then he leaves...those who as four-year-olds had the fortitude to hold out for the second marshmallow generally grew up to be better adjusted, more popular, adventurous, confident and dependable teenagers...It seems that the ability to delay gratification is a master skill, a triumph of the reasoning brain over the impulsive one."

—Nancy Gibbs, *"The EO Factor,"* Time (2 October 1995), pp. 60, 62.

THE MARSHMALLOW

It turns out that a scientist can see the future by watching four-year-olds interact with a marshmallow...You can have this marshmallow right now, he says. But if you wait while I run an errand, you can have two



DISCUSS

What would it take to keep 'instant gratification' from distracting you from your priorities?

A LIVING EXAMPLE

"My grandfather made an impact on my life greater than any man I ever knew. He was not the wealthiest man in town, but he was well respected and content. He was hard-working, sometimes working as many as 60 to 70 hours a week, but every day he went home and ate lunch with his wife. He would spend hours fishing with my brother and me, always making us feel there was no other place on earth he would rather be. I remember him saying over and over again, 'if a man does not keep his word, he is not much of a man.' Integrity was a big deal to him, and it became a big deal to those around him.

"In 1991, his wife of 62 years started showing the signs of Alzheimer's disease. By 1992 he was having difficulty taking care of all her physical needs. At the urging of friends, family and physicians, he had his wife admitted to a nursing home. When the day arrived for his wife to be admitted into the nursing home, he packed what few belongings he had and admitted himself as a resident with her. When asked why, he said, 'Sixty-two years ago I made a commit-

ment to this woman to live with her in sickness and in health till death do us part.'

"This decision was a reflection of a priority that he had lived out the past 62 years. At 89 my grandfather stands just over 5 feet 5 inches, but I have realized the size of a man is not measured by his physical stature. The size of a man is measured by his character. My grandfather has it, and he is the biggest man I know."

—Dan Brenton, traveling speaker



DISCUSS

How do the decisions you make now impact your life later? What are some practical things you do that help to keep you from losing sight of what is important?

The Safety Net

VALUE BASED PRIORITIES



DISCUSS

How would you define a value?

AN OBSERVATION

"The spiritual dimension is your core, your center, your commitment to your value system."

—Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 292

In his book, Covey suggests there are four dimensions of our nature that need development: physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional.

The character goes in before the influence goes out.

CHECK THIS OUT

"Integrity is not what we do so much as who we are. And who we are, in turn, determines what we do. Our system of values is so much a part of us we cannot separate it from ourselves. It becomes the navigating system that guides us. It establishes priorities in our lives and judges what we will accept or reject."

—John C. Maxwell, Developing The Leader Within You (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), p. 36.



DISCUSS

How can we develop values like integrity in our lives?

CONSIDER

Consider values in three basic areas: relationship with others (social/emotional—relationship with self (physical, mental)—relationship with God (spiritual)



DISCUSS

What does it look like to live out these three values? Which of these three areas needs development in your life? Why?

How to Juggle All the Balls

APPLICATION

APPLICATION

Self: What are some non-negotiables for your personal development? _____

Suggestions: _____

What have you done to improve yourself lately (physical, spiritual, mental or social/emotional)? _____

Others: What have you done to serve someone else lately? _____

Think through your existing relationships. Which ones do you want to pursue and why? What existing conflicts, if any, do you need to resolve? _____

Suggestions: _____

God: What have you done to develop your relationship with God lately? _____

What is a good "next step" in your spiritual development? _____

Suggestions: _____

CONCLUSION

"In reading about the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves...self-discipline with all of them came first." -Harry Truman