



# TEN QUICK TIPS

- 1 **Make a list of your top five values.** This is the person you want to be. Your #1 value is your highest priority. The order of values is important.
- 2 **How do you spend your time now?** Are you spending the currency of your life (your time) in accordance with your values?
- 3 **Set personal goals.** You need goals for exercise, spending time with family, and personal growth.
- 4 **Don't let advertising dictate your needs.** Your health is more important than owning the latest model year car.
- 5 **Consider your spiritual needs.** Deeply held religious beliefs are a powerful stress mitigator.
- 6 **A certain amount of stress is good.** The absence of stress is boredom. Too much stress and you get sick. Find the amount that keeps you in balance.
- 7 **Understand the tyranny of the urgent.** *Urgent things are seldom important and important things are seldom urgent.* If you don't *set aside* time for the important things - you will always be putting out fires and never getting ahead.
- 8 **Steal time from activities (like TV) that are neither urgent or important** and give it to important activities such as exercise, planning, learning, and relationship building.
- 9 **Seek employers who respect your need for balance.** Benefits, flex-time, child care, and fitness facilities show that an employer cares about balance.
- 10 **Leave a job that puts you in conflict with your top five values.**



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## 1 PAGE information guides

# Balancing the STRESS in Your Life

*How to juggle the conflicting demands of work and family.*



## What you need to know...

*I'm a waitress. I'm a sales manager. I'm a lawyer. I'm a teacher.* How many times have you heard people identify themselves by what they do for a living? This little bit of conversational convenience tends to highlight the notion that *you are what you do*. But this is not really accurate. You are *many* things: In addition to being whatever you do for a living you may also be a parent, a brother, a sister, a coach, a sports enthusiast, a friend, a cook, a member of your community, and so on.

**But we often act as though our jobs take priority over everything.** Afterall, it is our jobs and salary that provide us with *everything* we need, right? This seemingly logical deduction can throw your life out of balance.

That's because we justify night after night of working late *for the chance* of getting a promotion. We rationalize missing family events that will never come again *in hopes* of earning more money. We put off our personal needs (for exercise, recreation and eating right) for the possibility that someday we'll find the time *to do the very things that motivate us to go out and earn more money*.

When your work is going well this strategy works great. Your friends will understand if you don't call them, you're busy. And sure, you may feel a bit guilty about spending so much time away from family, but it will all be worth it if you can afford that big vacation you've been planning to take for years.

Sometimes these plans never materialize, or what happens if business cycles take a plunge? Eventually your unbalanced life-style will catch up with you and there will be nobody around to prop you up. Your friends will have forgotten who you are and your family may be more concerned with losing it's source of income than it is about

losing you.

**You need to be aware that you may be choosing to live your life out of balance.** We knowingly make unhealthy choices every day thinking that eventually we'll get around to making healthy ones. We promise ourselves that someday we'll begin that exercise program, spend more time with the kids, start that hobby, call an old friend, shop at the health food store, and go to church or temple but guess what? That day never comes - because work and our material needs *seem* more important.

**Advertising dictates our needs.** We operate under the illusion that all our hard work goes toward buying the things our families' really need. But our TV driven culture creates *artificial* needs in order to sell products such as expensive cars, electronic gadgets, and stainless steel kitchen appliances. This causes us to *think* we want these items more than the things we *truly* need such as friendship, love, health, exercise, *adequate* shelter, *adequate* transportation, and some sense of spiritual connectedness.

In order to live life in balance, you have to address these *real* needs. And if you decide to make this life-style change, you may have to decide *to be different from the vast majority of people you know*: To live healthy in a culture that idolizes living wealthy. To do something rewarding as opposed to doing something just for the reward. To give your family the gift of time instead of gifts paid for *by your* time.

**How to begin living life in balance.** This Easy-1 guide will show you how to set priorities in line with a new set of values customized to the person you want to become. It will help you see where to begin to make important life-style changes that can improve your sense of well-being. And most importantly, it will you show you how to carve out the time it takes to make these priorities a reality in your own life.



# What you might ask...

## **I am so overloaded with work I never finish my “to do” lists. I feel like I’m on a treadmill.**

Most of us spend our days just trying to keep up: When the phone or the door bell rings we answer it. When a customer wants something faxed we drop everything and do it. When a co-worker has a question we stop and answer it. These interruptions eat up our valuable time - no matter how little they contribute to our long-term goals. This overemphasis on urgent activities is what makes us feel like we’re never getting anywhere. Important things such as planning, exercise, furthering our education, and strengthening our closest relationships (that would move us in the direction of our goals) don’t get nearly as much attention because they’re not *urgent*. And it is often these non-urgent activities that can create a sense of balance in our lives.

## **Where am I supposed to find the time to pursue these non-urgent activities that foster balance?**

You can steal the time from activities which are neither urgent or important. Watching TV, reading junk mail, playing computer games, and puttering around the house are all examples of activities that are neither urgent or important. Borrow time wasted on these activities to pursue goals that *help you feel better about yourself*. For example, if you watch TV from 9 to 11 PM every night why not turn your TV off an hour earlier, go to bed, and get up an hour earlier. Now you’ve carved out an extra hour every morning for planning, exercising, reading, or learning some new skill that could move your life in a whole new direction. Other sources of available time include your lunch hour (relationship building), commuting time (educating yourself with a book on tape), or dinner (a time for bonding with family).

## **I feel guilty when I spend time doing things just for myself.**

Get over it. Your physical and mental health is much more important to your family than whether the furniture gets dusted or whether your car is the

current model year.

## **My boss doesn’t have kids. What do I do when she calls a staff meeting at 4:45?**

Be consistent. If you *always* have to leave at five - then leave and don’t feel the least bit guilty. If you feel this may be jeopardizing your career, check your list of values. (Refer to box on facing page.) See what’s at the top of the list and act accordingly. Maybe it’s time to look for an employer who puts family first. Offering flex-time, on-site daycare, an exercise facility, a wellness coordinator, an EAP department, and a good benefits plan are all signs that your employer cares about balance.

## **What’s the matter with wanting a new house and a new car, isn’t that the American Dream?**

There’s nothing wrong with wanting these things. But, keep in mind, the American Dream may not be *your* dream. It may be a dream imposed upon you by advertisers trying to sell their products. What you *want* and what you *need* are usually two completely different things. When you go after what you want at the expense of what you need, chances are you’ll be living your life out of balance.

## **I’m a workaholic but I really enjoy what I do. Why should I worry about balance?**

People who love what they do often find their work is so enjoyable they don’t need a break from it. Sometimes though, this feeling of invulnerability can wear off: When you’re hit with a health crisis, or if work loses it’s lustre, or even if you feel like you have no one with which to share the fruits of your labor. Even though you feel fine now, you’ll be better off in the long run if you address the issue of balance in your life, too.



# What you can do...

When your life is out of balance chances are you haven’t thought much about what your values are. Very few people ever take the time to do this, have you? For example, do you know what is more important to you than *anything* else? Do you know what is the next most important thing, and so on?

Look over the list of values below (see box) and circle the ones that are important *to you*. On a separate page list any other values you don’t see here. Then, try to prioritize your five most important values in order from 1 to 5. Create this list around the person you *want* to be. Be sure to rank your values in order of importance. (A person who puts work ahead of integrity is an entirely different person from someone who does the opposite.)

Once you have created your list ask yourself: Am I living my life in accordance with these values? How close am I to becoming the person I want to be? What would a neutral observer think my values are by watching how I allocate my time? Do I treat my family in accordance with my values? If you see a conflict growing between the person you are and the person you want to become, you might want to think about setting individual objectives that reflect your new values.

You may already have work and financial goals, but in order to live life in balance you need to set *personal* goals too. These can be goals for improving your relationships, your spiritual connectedness, your level of fitness, your education, and other areas as well. If you’re serious about becoming a more balanced person pick at least one thing you can do to improve your life in each of the following six areas. Write these goals down on paper and keep track of your progress.

**Build relationships.** It’s been said that 85% of our satisfaction in life comes from our relationships with people. Does your busy schedule reflect this? Make it a goal to spend time every day working on your most important relationships. This includes your spouse, your family, and your closest friends. You can’t achieve balance in your life if

these relationships aren’t nourished daily.

**Consider your spiritual needs.** This need is so different for everyone it’s almost impossible to make a general recommendation. Suffice it to say that if you don’t do *something*, you’ll always feel like *something* is missing.

**Start a regular exercise program.** For many people, this may be the hardest single step to achieving balance. So start *simple*. Commit yourself to an easily achievable goal of just one half-hour of exercise per week. Add another half-hour per day every other month until you reach 3-4 days a week. A brisk walk in a scenic park is a good place to start.

**Educate yourself.** Learning a new skill, taking a community college course, or trying something for the first time helps bring about balance by forcing you to grow. When you feel like you’re *not* growing your life gets stuck in a rut. But when you force yourself to grow you avoid this stagnation and the very real possibility of burnout.

**Find a hobby you love.** An engaging hobby can be the perfect antidote to the daily grind. Find an activity that highlights talents you seldom use at work.

**Nurture yourself.** Time spent relaxing, playing, reading, or cooking healthy foods is *not* an extravagance. It’s a vital part of your commitment to superior health. Your personal goals are just as important to your well-being as any professional goals you may have at work.

## List of Values

Health	Freedom	Being loved
Wealth	Recreation	Peace
Beauty	Wisdom	Volunteering
Integrity	Intelligence	Money
Success	Friendship	Fame
Happiness	Loving	Religion
Family	Status	God
Commitment	Work	Children
Helping others	Learning	