

## EXPOSING the MYTH of *Life Balance*



**I don't really know if life balance is attainable.** It seems ironic that I would write an article about life balance and open with such a statement, but the reality is, we spend more time trying to *find* balance than we do *in it* so maybe we should change how we think about life balance? Life balance is a myth. Are you relieved to hear that? The truth is, only one in four Canadians actually believe that work-life balance is possible. Are you one of those hopeful 25%, or are you still trying to juggle everything your week tosses at you hoping to eventually master the chaos? What if you had an alternative?

**Real balance** means living in a constant state of *off* balance, shifting and changing through all the highs and lows of life, and every now and then we slide into moments of ease where life feels manageable, enjoyable ... *balanced*. We'd all like those moments of ease to stay forever. That would be the life balance we *usually* hear about – everything falling into place *and staying there* – but life happens and we're shifted off-kilter once again. External incidents will happen whether you want them to or not so you need to take care of yourself and carry yourself through those highs and lows so the ride isn't so unmanageable.

**Life balance is a myth.** But I have a secret. I actually believe that true contentment and ease of living doesn't come from mastering the juggling act, or having those infernal ducks all in a row. It comes through what I call *self* balance – or taking care of all the elements of YOU so you're better able to deal with the endless *external* elements of LIFE that come at you day after day. You have no control over those external elements but you have choices every day about how you *self* balance. *Self* balance is keeping up with the good behaviours while you're trying to get rid of the bad habits. It's recognizing what you're good at amidst what needs work. *Self* balance means believing that imperfection is actually a *good* thing. Too many people tell me that life balance isn't attainable, that their schedules regularly knock them off balance. Having experienced my own rollercoaster ride toward life balance - my pessimism grew stronger. I couldn't remember *any* lengthy stretches of balanced bliss in my life since I entered senior high school, and I thought "*They're probably right. Life balance is a myth.*" So now what? Do we banish ourselves to lives of chaos and uncertainty, or find another, kinder, gentler way?

Below are 5 steps you can follow for *Self-balance* and Success. Embrace them in your own life, share them with clients and colleagues, and reap the benefits of off-balance.

### 5 Steps to SELF BALANCE and Success

#### 1. Respect yourself

Self respect is the level of regard you hold for your own character, or the level of respect you have of yourself. If you don't respect or even like yourself even a little bit you'll consistently make choices that will be incongruent with personal health and happiness. Because I respect myself, I will act in ways to feed that self-respect. I will treat myself well by getting enough rest, eating healthfully, and exercising regularly. If I'm around negative people, or if I'm treated disrespectfully I'll stand up for myself or I exit the situation. I allow myself to explore work and play opportunities that interest me. All of these circumstances are fed by a healthy self-esteem, and build on it in meaningful ways. If self-respect is something that you lack, begin by writing

down three things about yourself that you like. Begin each day with these three affirmations. Post them where you can see them, recite them regularly, add to them, and begin to act 'As if'. This can be a challenging task, so if you need help, download my 'I Rock Exercise' at [www.michellecederberg.com](http://www.michellecederberg.com) (under the 'Just for You' link). You may even choose to get professional guidance through a counselor or personal coach.

## **2. Respect your body**

I believe in the importance of taking care of your physical machine as an essential part of finding better balance. You have a responsibility to yourself *and* your loved ones to take care of *the vehicle* that carries you through life. How well are you taking care of *your* machine? While I believe that physical activity is one of the best ways to kick start the physical machinery and keep it running at optimum, there are other equally important ways to prime the engine. It's about getting enough rest, minimizing stress, eating healthfully, drinking lots of water, *minimizing* toxins like caffeine and alcohol, *eliminating* toxins like cigarettes and drugs, *and* getting adequate amounts of physical activity each week. All of these factors work together to help your physical machine run smoothly. You can't operate a vehicle without oil, fuel, or regular maintenance and expect it to keep going. Why should you expect your body to take the repeated abuse of late nights, long days, poor food choices, too much stress, and not enough exercise?

## **3. Prioritize Growth**

No matter how hectic our schedules get, we all need to spend even a small amount of time in our week nurturing our passions. If you're fortunate as I am to be one of those people who can whole-heartedly say "I love my job!" then all that's left for you to do is celebrate and keep doing what you're doing. Most people, however, don't *love* what they do day-to-day, but continue their work out of simple necessity. Fear not! You can follow your passion outside the hours of work as well! Make a list of all of the things you'd love to be spending more time doing (and you can do this even if you *like* your job). Post that list where you can see it daily. In your busy week, plan to schedule in a minimum of ten minutes doing something for you from that list. Personal growth comes from valuing your dreams and passions, and giving them a platform for expression.

## **4. Do what you can**

We talk ourselves out of personal time, fun, and growth by telling ourselves we're *too busy*. Why not simply do what you can? If you ever hope to realize any of your life dreams or even short-term goals, the *only* first step is to make a commitment to fit it in – to create a habit around your dreams. *Intention* alone will not get you there. You must chart your course and follow it – even in small steps – and this will eventually bring you results. Can you find 10 minutes to spare for yourself one or two times a week? Remember, you don't need enough time to change the world you just need enough time to get started. Take small steps of commitment that will lead to successful results. It a profoundly straightforward four-step plan:

- Step #1      Identify your goal and write it down.
- Step #2      Map out the days and times you'll pursue your goal each week.
- Step #3      Determine what part of your goal you will work on at the chosen date/time.
- Step #4      When those dates arrive, *no matter what* spend time on your goal.

## 5. Practice Gratitude

Change can be challenging. The pursuit of better balance, or finding more time for yourself will be met with highs and lows. That's life, and no matter where you are on your rollercoaster ride, your experience will shift toward the positive *every time* if you embrace an attitude of gratitude. A few weekends ago I had the fortune to speak at a women's conference at a 5 star resort in the Canadian Rockies. The hotel was beautiful, the scenery was spectacular, the food was magnificent, and the conference was empowering. At lunch one day, as we sat in this room with a breathtaking view of the lake and mountains, one of my colleagues shuffled restlessly in her seat, and looked around with irritation "The service is *really* slow here! What does a girl have to do to get a cup of coffee?" I wanted a cup of coffee too, but there were over 200 women there and it was a busy time. Instead of jumping on the complaints wagon I chose to smile, enjoy my meal, and take in the view. It's not about 'stuffing' the negatives and pretending they're not there. It's about acknowledging them, but *choosing* to look for the good in every situation instead – especially if I have no control over the outcome. In your pursuit of *self-balance* congratulate yourself when you achieve even a small goal. If something doesn't go according to plan choose to focus on the parts that were successful, and ask yourself "What am I meant to learn from this?" By operating from a position of gratitude you'll bring more of that to your life. By focusing on the negatives, you'll enhance the appearance of negative circumstances in your life – it's all you'll see. It's no SECRET!

Sure, life balance may not be possible, but that's a big relief to me. I don't have enough energy to control and change all of those external 'to do's'. By choosing *self* balance – or taking care of all the elements of YOU – you're better able to deal with the endless *external* elements of LIFE that come at you day after day. When you put yourself first – even for small portions of your day – you will begin to see the world differently, prioritize more healthfully, and create a life that may still be busy and 'on-the-go' but will feel more at ease and in control. The secret is out. It's all about YOU!

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Michelle Cederberg – "Your 'Getting to It' Guru"

Michelle Cederberg leads the industry for life balance, health, and stress management programs, resources, and tools that *actually* conquer procrastination, fatigue, and loss of motivation. Her expansive education and experience combined with her unique products, platform skills and messaging will ensure individuals and corporations understand that "It's not the *doing* that's tough, it's GETTING TO IT!" and she helps you figure out how. With a Masters in Kinesiology, a BA in Psychology, and a specialization in Health and Exercise Psychology, Michelle combines mind, body, and practicality to inspire change! She has built her career since 1990, as a college educator, personal trainer, fitness coordinator, author, and business owner. As a professional speaker, she shares her experiences in a humorous and realistic way with delighted audiences across North America. Michelle knows her energy has fueled her business success! Today, through her products and presentations she motivates you to take small steps toward BIG changes, so you can *actually* GET TO the good things – even with a busy schedule!

To book Michelle to speak at your organization please fill out a booking request at [www.michellecederberg.com](http://www.michellecederberg.com)  
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