



March 2022

# Wisdom Story



The Greek goddess, *Sophrosyne* (goddess of moderation), was trapped in Pandora's Box. When it was opened, *Sophrosyne*, flew straight back to Olym-

Our sixth source points us toward the importance of balance: *Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.*

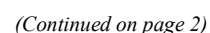
## Balance & Repairing the World

The repair of the world is often addressing problems that result from imbalance. Many occur in society and are created and sustained over generations by an imbalance of economic, political, gender, and racial power that manifest locally, nationally, and globally through financial inequity (e.g., gender wage gap, income & wealth inequality, poverty, homelessness, and more), racism due to white privilege & supremacy, food insecurity, food deserts & famine, health inequity, educational inequity, and more. In September 2000, the UN adopted 8 Millennium Development Goals that address many important global imbalances. Notable among them was “Ensure environmental sustainability.” Accelerating climate change and resulting environmental degradation are imbalances that also must be addressed.

## *A Theme-Based Ministry Project*

## Finding Balance

... "What's up?"



# Repairing the World

## A Gift of Balance

(Continued from page 1) **Wisdom Story**

..."Nothing much," Sebastian said. ..."Ray noticed that Sebastian was looking at Ray's skateboard.

"Do you want to try it?" Ray asked.

Sebastian frowned. "Sure I do, but I don't know how. It looks hard."

"Well, I could show you..." Ray said.

Ray ...showed Sebastian how to place his left foot and kick off with his right. Then Sebastian tried it. ...Ray ...heard himself saying the same words Vikram had said to him: "It's all about balance, finding your center."

By the time Ray had to go home, Sebastian was really catching on.

..."You should get a skateboard, too," Ray told him.

..."Yeah, that would be cool," Sebastian said, "but I don't think that's going to happen. There's not a lot of money ... at my house, but I had fun learning.... Thanks...."

...Ray felt sad. It wasn't fair that some kids could have a skateboard, and other kids who would really like riding one could not.

...Suddenly, Ray knew what he wanted for his birthday. ..."Mom! I know what I want for my birthday! I want half a birthday!" The words tumbled out of his mouth as Ray explained.

"A sports fund for kids. What a great idea! I think we could get a lot of people's help at church," his mother said.

..."We can use the money to help other people get something they do need. It's kind of like having your cake and eating it too," she continued.

"Oh, I definitely want cake on my birthday," said Ray.

...His mom laughed. "I just meant it's the kind of birthday present that is good in a lot of different ways. It's very...."

"Balanced?" Ray filled in.

"Yes," said his mom. "...When the gifts you gave up help someone else, that makes a kind of balance. If that makes any kind of sense."

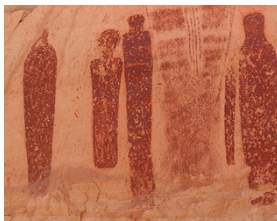
"Yep," said Ray. "It does. If I can find my center and my balance, that's the best birthday present I can think of."

Source: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session5/132324.shtml>

## Do No Harm

### Koyaanisqatsi

The title of the 1982 experimental non-narrative film *Koyaanisqatsi*, produced and directed by Godfrey Reggio, is a Hopi word that means "life out of balance" or "life of moral corruption and turmoil." The film also defines the word as "crazy life," "life in turmoil," "life disintegrating," and "a state of life that calls for another way of living." David Conrad writes, "It doesn't have dialogue, but it's not silent. It doesn't have a traditional script, but it has words. It's famous for its searing images, but it makes ears ring."



The first image in the film is an ancient pictograph by the Fremont Indians located in the *Great Gallery* at *Horseshoe Canyon* in the *Canyonlands National Park* in Utah. The film starts slowly, and has a calming effect until a close-up appears of the Saturn V rocket during the lift-off of the Apollo 12 mission. This fades into a scene of a desert landscape followed by footage of changing ocean waves and cloud formations.

The soundtrack by Philip Glass, which won the *Golden Globe Award* for Best Soundtrack, is compelling. Many segments use slow-motion or time-lapse cinematography. Some sequences are of nature and offer brief respites, but most focus on human society, and are jarring. The longest segment of the film at 22 minutes is called *The Grid*. Its theme is the speed of modern life, and the people in this sequence seem like ants.

Three Hopi prophecies are sung during *Prophecies*, at the end of the film. They are: 1. *If we dig precious things from the land, we will invite disaster.* 2. *Near the day of Purification, there will be cobwebs spun back and forth in the sky.* 3. *A container of ashes might one day be thrown from the sky, which could burn the land and boil the oceans.* The film is a Rorschach test that invites consideration of how we are harming the environment and ourselves.

Source: Touchstones

## Even-Mindedness

### Balancing the Emotions

Jennie Lee

...We fluctuate between feeling good and bad, happy and sad. We like this and dislike that. We try to attract joy and we attempt to avoid suffering. We ...react again [and again].

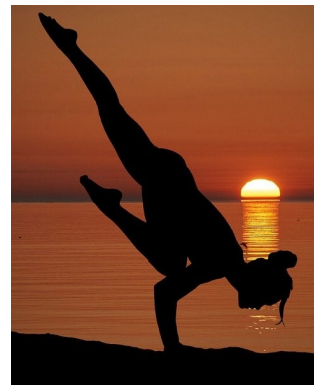
...When we feel up, we usually want to stay there, so we develop attachment (*raga*)—the pull toward anything we like or want. When we feel down, we want to get away so we develop aversion (*dvesa*)—the pushing away from something. We experience *dvesa* when we encounter a relationship or sensation that does not feel good.

...Although natural, these emotional swings are inhibitors to our ability to sustain inner peace and lasting happiness. ...We must practice even-mindedness to overcome our tendencies to move toward *raga* or *dvesa*. Choosing to be non-reactive and non-opinionated ...is the key to getting off the emotional see-saw....

Here are six spiritual practices to help balance your emotions....

1. Notice the impulse to move toward or away from things—[stay present].
2. Practice being content with whatever is happening, rather than seeking to have your personal agenda filled.
3. Remember to be compassionately present in circumstances that might be undesirable or uncomfortable.
4. Choose to be a witness rather than indulge that which wants to be heard.
5. Practice non-reactivity when conflict arises and seek a ...peaceful resolution.
6. Attempt to be neutral rather than opinionated in most circumstances.

Source: from *6 Spiritual Practices To Balance Your Emotions* at <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-18665/6-spiritual-practices-to-balance-your-emotions.html>



# Readings from the Common Bowl

**Day 1:** "The aim is to balance the terror of being alive with the wonder of being alive."

Carlos Castaneda



**Day 2:** "Somehow, we'll find it. The balance between whom we wish to be and whom we need to be. But for now, we simply have to be satisfied with who we are."

Brandon Sanderson

**Day 3:** "Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some."

Robert Fulghum

**Day 4:** "How odd to be made of flesh, balanced on bone, and filled with a soul you've never met."

Tarryn Fisher

**Day 5:** "You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact and remember that *Life's a Great Balancing Act*. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft. And never mix up your right foot with your left."

Dr. Seuss

**Day 6:** "The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?"

Oscar Wilde

**Day 7:** "Life is a balance of holding on and letting go."

Keith Urban

**Day 8:** "A man without contradictions to balance him will soon veer off."

Mark Lawrence

**Day 9:** "This is a difficult balance, telling the truth: how much to share, how much to keep, which truths will wound but not ruin, which will cut too deep to heal."

Ally Condie

**Day 10:** "...You'll have to balance your goals and hopes with feeding yourself, paying debts, finding work, settling for what you can get."

Neil Gaiman

**Day 11:** "Countless words / count less / than the silent balance / between yin and yang."

Lao Tzu

**Day 12:** "The richest and fullest lives attempt to achieve an inner balance between three realms: work, love, and play."

Erik Erikson

**Day 13:** "A bad day for your ego is a great day for your soul."

Jillian Michaels

**Day 14:** "Without balance, a life is no longer worth the effort."

Olen Steinhilber

**Day 15:** "True stability results when presumed order and presumed disorder are balanced. A truly stable system expects the unexpected, is prepared to be disrupted, waits to be transformed."

Tom Robbins

**Day 16:** "Value is not made of money, but a tender balance of expectation and longing."

Barbara Kingsolver

**Day 17:** "There are those wonderful moments of clarity in life when one is reminded how irreparably flawed we humans are."

Once, when I was nineteen, on the subway in Boston I lost my balance slightly and bumped into an elderly woman. I quickly apologized and she replied, "Well, hold on to something, stupid." There it is. That's it. That's it in a nutshell."

Paula Poundstone

**Day 18:** "Food is an important part of a balanced diet."

Fran Lebowitz

**Day 19:** "But it seemed to me that this was the way we all lived: full to the brim with gratitude and joy one day, wrecked on the rocks the next. Finding the balance between the two was the art and the salvation."

Elizabeth Berg

**Day 20:** "The re-establishment of an ecological balance depends on the ability of society to counteract the progressive materialization of values."

Ivan Illich

**Day 21:** "At the heart of science is an essential balance between two seemingly

contradictory attitudes—an openness to new ideas, no matter how bizarre or counterintuitive they may be, and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. This is how deep truths are winnowed from deep nonsense."

Carl Sagan

**Day 22:** "Do not imagine that the good you intend will balance the evil you perform."

Norman Mac Donald

**Day 23:** "I want to caution you against the idea that balance has to be a routine that looks the same week in and week out."

Kevin Thoman

**Day 24:** "War is a time out of balance. When it is truly over, we must work to restore peace and sacred harmony once again."

Joseph Bruchac

**Day 25:** "The balance of your personality is your temperament, all the biologically based tendencies that contribute to your consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving."

Helen Fisher

**Day 26:** "Life had taught him about something far more complicated than justice. Its name was balance."

Carsten Jensen



**Day 27:** "I survive by finding the sweet spot between reason and unreason, between the rational and irrational."

Dean Koontz

**Day 28:** "There's a major fault in Western society. It makes room for only one god, and in only one gender. There's no balance, no co-existence, no partnership."

Tomson Highway

**Day 29:** "A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct."

Frank Herbert

**Day 30:** "How one walks through the world, the endless small adjustments of balance, is affected by the shifting weights of beautiful things."

Elaine Scarry

**Day 31:** "...you have to use your failures as stepping stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair. In the end, it's all a question of balance."

Rohinton Mistry





## Balance for Busyness

Rev. Susan Manker-Seale

...My daily spiritual practice is to balance. A major part of that practice involves balancing the busy, taking-for-granted moments of the day with moments to pause and appreciate what is before me in my life. I probably wouldn't even have considered this a spiritual practice except that I've been learning to redefine the meaning of what is spiritual, and to ponder for myself what is important in my faith.

I went to a writer's workshop once in which Allen Ginsberg led us in poetry exercises. He told us to pick any word, and make combinations using it with other words. Then we were to pick the most outrageous or interesting combination and write it into a haiku. The first word I thought of was "notebook," and the silly pair I chose was "diaper notebook." This came out: *Beside the holy books / I'd like to see one / diaper notebook / well-used!*

The message many of us have been given through our religious heritage is that if one wishes to be "spiritual," one must leave the worldly world. Yet the reality is that, if we have family and work, integrating a traditional spiritual practice into our daily lives is a real challenge. Try meditating with a baby in the next room!

I know there are others more disciplined than I, but I have had years when I was able to be disciplined. I used to keep a journal in early college, but rarely write that way anymore. I was taught to meditate one summer when I was out of balance in my life. For a year, I meditated twice each day, to great benefit of spirit. But slowly, I let it slide, and am trying to get myself to make room for it once again. I studied aikido for a year and a half, but moved, and my new teacher didn't blend the physical with the spiritual in the way my original teacher had. I am a poet, have written poetry for most of my life, learning from the insights I discover through such a process, yet never in a regular

exercise. The latest practice I engaged in was to walk for twenty minutes three times a week, for both my physical and my mental health, and I kept that up for two years until I went back to teaching full-time and the mornings I so loved were no longer open to me. I just couldn't transfer to evening, with dinner preparation and children at home. ...

Every change in my life has seemed to disrupt my pattern, and each time I've had to find out what fit my new situation. But, even though I haven't kept up these practices regularly, I have learned from them, been shaped by them. They are tools, not ends. They help us learn to slow down, to pay attention, to focus, or to empty. They are not definitions of spirituality themselves. The deep meaning of spirituality is breath. Breath is the taking in of life-giving essence from the world around us, and the release, in turn, of life-giving essence. It is a metaphor for our interdependencies: the fact that we change and are changed by our environment in a continuous play of creation. Spiritual practices are aimed at helping us understand that connectedness, to sense our oneness, to the end that our yearning is appeased in actuality. For whether you call it God/dess, Nature, Spirit, or Oneness (or some other word), the feeling of presence is very real for many of us. It is a feeling which sustains me, and fills me with appreciation for all that is my life.

We can practice spirituality in our daily lives, in our daily activities, by remembering to pause, pay attention, and feel appreciation for what is before us. Paying attention means using all of our senses in being in the world and in the moment. Stop a moment. Feel the chair in which you are sitting. Notice the temperature around you. Listen for the sounds of your background symphony. Breathe. Appreciate the colors of your clothes, your skin, the sky, or the ceiling. Focus on appreciating the peace out of which you have found the time to read or listen to these words. Remember the feeling of oneness with creation, and try to bring that back into being. This practice only takes a few moments and is

not bound by place or time or ritual.

Once, as I paused in writing at my desk to listen, I heard, and wrote a poem: *Poem for Thursday / Dove calls through busy morning walls / The dove calls / She calls / And silence fills my mind / Hush! / The dove calls.*



Out of our busyness, we are called back into balance, back into ourselves and the silence of present being. But it is not just back into ourselves to which we are called; it is also to the awareness of the continuous presence of the environment around us and within us. We are called to remember our relationships and our dependencies. We are called to once again feel the oneness which sustains our being in balance with creation, and to do so with wonder and appreciation.

There is nothing difficult about this practice. There are times, I will admit, when it is harder to recall that sense of presence and connection. When that happens, I usually realize that I've gotten somewhat out of touch with my body, and so I spend a little more time putting myself behind my eyes, so to speak. I don't just see; I see broadly, to the edges of my sockets, my brows and lashes. I put myself back into my hands and arms, feel my feet and the length of my body. I find my heartbeat, and my breath. As I become aware once again of the vessel which is me, the sense of awareness of presence grows, expands into the space around me, connecting me to all that I see and hear and touch and feel and taste. Balance returns.

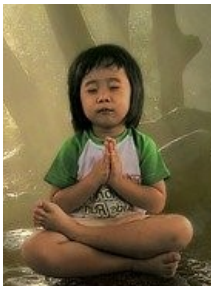
Source: *Everyday Spiritual Practice*, edited by Scott Alexander, (2009) Skinner House Books, Boston, MA

## Family Matters

### Learning Balance

Children learn to balance before they can progress to higher-level gross motor skills like negotiating stairs, as well as hopping, galloping, and skipping. These may appear simple, but they are actually quite complex. Mastering the necessary balance for all of these movements is an important aspect of child development.

If physical balance is challenging, life balance is far more so. Balance in children's lives is very important. Unitarian Universalist minister Robert Fulghum, author of the piece, *All I Really Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, writes, "Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some." And yet, children's lives can often be as frenetic and unbalanced as that of their parents. While it is true that the purpose of life is not to go faster, children are often caught up in the whirlwind.



In *Creating Balance in Children's Lives*, Lorraine Moore and Peggy Henrikson, write, "Achieving a state of balance, and thus harmonious behavior and effective

learning abilities, has become more and more difficult given the changes and pressures of today's society." The benefits to a child with a balanced lifestyle are enormous and include feeling good about oneself, experiencing life with joy and tolerance rather than frustration and anger, approaching challenges and crises with confidence, etc. Children learn balance by modeling parents and by benefit of a life structure and daily schedule in which balance is embedded. It requires that children have both the ability and freedom to say yes and no to all the activities that are open to them. Yet, it is difficult for children's lives to be more balanced than their parents. Source: *Touchstones*

### Family Activity:

#### Stories about Balance

These three children's books offer different, thoughtful considerations about balance that parents can read/watch and discuss with their children.

##### *Just A Little Bit* by

Ann Tompert and

Lynn Munsinger:

How will elephant

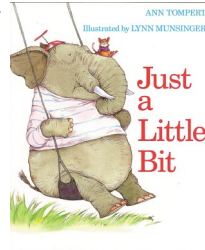
and mouse ride on

the seesaw? With a

LOT of help!

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtUpMPwxHq0> (4:47)



##### *The Biggest House in the World* by

Leo Lionni: A

young snail

dreams of

having the big-

gest house—or

shell—in the

world. Then

one day, his

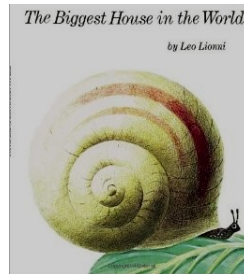
wise father

tells him the story of another snail with the same dream. Things quickly go out of balance.

Video Link: [https://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4LvKETb8uU)

[www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4LvKETb8uU)

[v=W4LvKETb8uU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4LvKETb8uU) (4:49)



##### *Who Sank the Boat?*

by Pamela Allen:

Beside the

sea, there

once lived

a cow, a

donkey, a sheep, a pig, and a tiny

little mouse. They were good friends,

and one warm, sunny morning, for no

particular reason, they decided to go

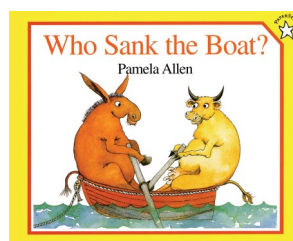
for a row in the bay. Do you know

who sank the boat?

Video Link: [https://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CmXIntGEIQ)

[www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CmXIntGEIQ)

[v=0CmXIntGEIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CmXIntGEIQ) (2:59)



## Balance/Harmony in Life

### The Tao of Pooh

MalJohn2

Benjamin

Hoff (and

Pooh)

remind us

that happi-

ness lies in

how we live

our lives....

"When

you wake up

in the morn-

ing, Pooh,"

said to Pig-

let ... "what's

the first thing

you say to

yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, I wonder what's going to happen

exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully. "It's the same thing," he said.

A basic Taoist principle is that we appreciate life as it is—the sweet with the bitter; that we savor the sweet and that we learn from the bitter. Pooh Bear has that figured out, except he doesn't know that he has....

...He often tells his friends ...that he loves honey, but he will ...admit that he isn't sure if he loves the actual taste of honey more than the anticipation of the taste of honey. Both are so, so sweet!

When we enjoy our everyday moments fully, we, too, realize that we can enjoy the journey as much as the destination. Like Pooh, the *anticipation* of arriving at the destination is just as sweet to us as the final quest. And *The Tao of Pooh* reminds us that nothing and doing are equally important. Because in Taoism, doing nothing signifies *something*.

...On any spiritual journey we learn that balance and harmony within our bodies and minds will lead to balance and harmony in our lives....

Hoff ...gently reminds us ...that we are enough just as we are. No one realizes this more than Pooh Bear.

Source: [https://](https://thegiftsthatweshare.wordpress.com/2015/08/23/winnie-the-pooh-has-all-the-answers/)

[thegiftsthatweshare.wordpress.com/2015/08/23/winnie-the-pooh-has-all-the-answers/](https://thegiftsthatweshare.wordpress.com/2015/08/23/winnie-the-pooh-has-all-the-answers/)





# Environmental Balance is a Moral Imperative

(Continued from page 1) **Introduction**

As children, we learn about balance in the playground. The mechanism is a see-saw. Such a simple device, a lever on a fulcrum, but it requires force and balance to go up and down again and again. Children don't need any knowledge of physics or gravity to love the ride. Given equal weight of two children, working to maintain a balance with both in the air was also a source of delight.

Balance is fundamental to life. In fact, without the ability to "balance," we could not stand up or walk. Noah Stephens-Davidowitz writes, "The human body is unquestionably the most complicated machine that any person has ever encountered." This complexity is matched by the internal systems that keep the body healthy. They are governed by the process of homeostasis, which helps maintain a fairly constant internal condition. The word comes from two Greek words, *homeo*, meaning "the same," and *statis*, meaning "standing." While literally translated as "staying the same," homeostasis is not a static state. It is a dynamic, ever-changing reality that maintains balance within all internal systems.

Spiritual and emotional balance are also crucial if we are to live well. One aspect of this is life-work balance. Its importance has been magnified as people have weathered the ongoing pandemic. Life is too short and precious to ignore this.

If the human body is complex, the planet earth is exponentially more so, made up as it is by habitats, species, populations, communities, ecosystems, and biomes. Characterized by incredible balance (regulated by homeostatic mechanisms) amid incredible diversity, the planet is both robust and fragile. The interconnections among species are often beyond imagination. A break in the chain of being can result in damage to the ecosystem because balance is disrupted. Too much stress and disruption can eventually lead to the collapse of an ecosystem and more.

The wild card on the planet is human beings. The growing reality of this has shifted the way in which the concept of

sustainability has evolved—moving from a primary concern for development benefiting humans to a concept of sustainability that attempts to balance the environmental dimension with the economic dimension and the social dimension (e.g., peace, security, social justice, etc.).



The dream of planetary balance has been articulated by Joanna Macy in her work involving *The Great Turning*. For her it involves three dimensions: 1: Actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings; 2. Analysis of structural causes and the creation of structural alternatives; and 3. Shift in Consciousness. Building on this, David Korten, author of *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, writes, "If there is to be a human future, we must bring ourselves into balanced relationship with one another and the Earth." Korten proposes three turnings. It begins with a **cultural turning** involving a spiritual awakening as we move from material excess to spiritual fulfillment, from limitations to possibilities, and from fear of difference to joy in diversity. This leads to **economic turning** where wealth becomes the measure of the health of our families, communities, and natural environment. Ownership is replaced by stewardship as hoarding is replaced by sharing. Finally, the **political turning** is the move from passive to active citizenship, from competition for individual advantage to cooperation for mutual advantage, and from retributive justice to restorative justice.

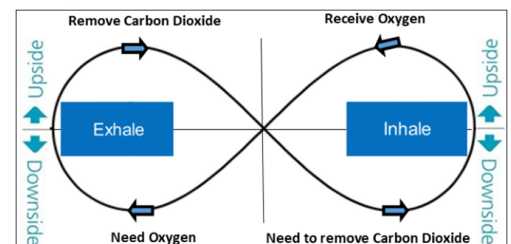
As it turns out, the ancient idea and ideal of balance is a moral imperative to secure a future that we can inhabit on this home, our only home, that we call Earth.

Source: Touchstones

# Come to Your Senses

## Polarity Management

Barry Posner, in his book, *Polarity Management: Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems*, argued that many apparent problems involve opposite poles. Both poles are necessary for good functioning. A "problem" emerges when one pole is so suppressed that Ying loses its Yang, or so emphasized that the other pole cannot function well. As a result, polarities are not a problem to be solved but an interdependent, cyclical infinity loop to be managed. To illustrate, Posner shares an example of what happened when one polarity dominates among people who were trying to perfect a meditation technique. *One group maintained that while breathing was important to meditation, the action of exhaling was actually far superior for it allowed the one meditating to symbolically discharge whatever was getting in the way of deep meditation. The other group was equally doctrinaire in their allegiance to inhaling, for they saw it as the action that brought life in the form of oxygen into the body. Each group argued for their position: more inhaling, less exhaling; more exhaling, less inhaling. And then they crossed a line spurred on by their own certainty: no inhaling, only exhaling; no exhaling, only inhaling. Finally, after they had all passed out from one excess or the other, their respiration once again found its natural rhythm, and they came to their senses, both literally and figuratively.*



Not exhale with no inhale or the reverse, but exhale and inhale.

Further, the chemistry factory that we call our body is composed of countless loops that must function well to keep us healthy.

These flows between them does so in a continuous loop. Each pole has a desirable up side and a problematic down side so the ongoing progression along the loop is essential. Some say that the concept of

(Continued on page 8)

## Glass Balls Can Break

### How to Juggle

H.J. Greenhaus and his colleagues define work-life balance as the “extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with his or her work role and home role.” Work-life balance includes satisfaction and effectiveness at work, as well as at home with a minimum of conflict among roles one holds. They further suggest that work life balance is defined by three key and interconnected components: 1.) **Time balance**, which refers to equal time being given to both work and nonwork roles; 2.) **Involvement balance**, which refers to equal levels of psychological involvement in both work and life roles; and finally, 3.) **Satisfaction balance**, which refers to equal levels of satisfaction in both work and home roles. Therefore, in order to achieve a work-life balance these components need to be considered.

Work-life balance has become a growing concern because, for so many people, setting boundaries around work is difficult. On September 6, 1991, Brian Dyson, then CEO of Coca-Cola, gave the commencement address at Georgia Tech. In that address, he offered an important way of framing work-life priorities in order to make better choices about how to balance between work and life. Dyson said, “Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them work, family, health, friends and spirit. And you’re keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls—family, health, friends and spirit—are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.”

Source: Touchstones



## Buddhist Balance

### A Safe Space in Equanimity

Sharon Salzberg

In Buddhist psychology, the word “equanimity” is commonly used to describe the idea of balance. Being able to find equanimity is essential for all of us—particularly when overwhelming emotions arise. A state of equanimity is not one of passivity or indifference, but of space and stillness, as well as connection and compassion. It’s an empowered state....



...I do believe that whatever balance I can bring forth is the result of my meditation practice. We are wired toward survival, so if something makes us feel threatened, we want to defend ourselves. Perhaps that means our minds get triggered to figure out what’s going on—what the situation means—and we end up telling ourselves stories fraught with judgments and assumptions.

...We can choose not to make an enemy of our feelings, as tempting as it may be. Instead, we can choose to expand and allow them to come up. That space brings wisdom that keeps us from getting lost in immediate reactivity.

...Equanimity ...frees us.... We can learn to be present with emotions without falling into the extremes of overwhelm or denial. Equanimity is the state in which we can recognize an emotion like anger and even feel its intensity, but we also pay attention to our own choice in how we respond to a given feeling, thought, or circumstance. ...We can create space for ourselves to feel without drowning in a given feeling. The creation of that space is the essence of equanimity.

Seeing how other people react to a given situation is often a helpful reminder of how much choice there really is for all of us when it comes to how we respond to things.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/blog/a-safe-space-in-equanimity/>

## 3 Laws of Balance

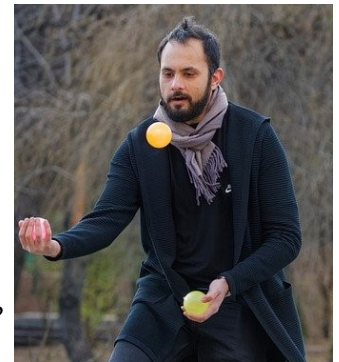
### A Balanced Life

*Balanced: a condition in which different elements are equal or in the correct proportions.*

Success in life usually comes by maintaining balance, or being balanced, with the things that matter most to us. As children, we need a healthy balance of independence paired with the right amount of parental nurture. As adults, we’re attracted to balanced people. For example, we want to be with people who have a good sense of humor, but who are also comfortable sharing about more serious life issues. As working individuals, failure to find balance between our jobs and our families and friends [i.e., work-life balance] leads to either professional or personal failure.

All of life requires balance. Without the correct proportions of life’s ingredients, we experience instability, resulting in a crash.

So, what’s the secret to maintaining your balance as you navigate through life’s circumstances? Well, if you’ve ever



tried to balance anything, you know that there are three things to remember:

**1. Maintain a reference point.** Anybody whose safety depends on maintaining balance will tell you that you must focus on a reference point.

**2. Make constant corrections.** Given an environment with fluctuating circumstances, you have to make constant corrections in order to stay balanced.

**3. Establish a clear objective.** What’s your goal? What are you trying to do? What are you trying to balance?

...These [are] the three laws of balance. However, these laws aren’t limited to just balancing physical objects. These laws apply to all areas of life in which you are trying to achieve balance.

Source: <http://storage.cloversites.com/sonlightcommunitychurch/documents/balanced%20study%20guide.pdf>



## Small Group Discussion Guide

### Theme for Discussion: Balance

**Preparation prior to Gathering:** (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

**Business:** Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

**Opening Words:** “Half of me is filled with bursting words and half of me is painfully shy. I crave solitude yet also crave people. I want to pour life and love into everything yet also nurture my self-care and go gently. I want to live within the rush of primal, intuitive decision, yet also wish to sit and contemplate. This is the messiness of life—that we all carry multitudes, so must sit with the shifts. We are complicated creatures, and ultimately, the balance comes from this understanding.” *Victoria Erickson*

**Chalice Lighting:** (James Vila Blake) adapted (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

**Check-In:** How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

**Claim Time for Deeper Listening:** This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time.

**Read the Wisdom Story:** Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page one.

**Readings from the Common Bowl:** Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

**Sitting In Silence:** Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

**Reading:** “A balanced life isn’t to do as we please, but to learn to do what is right. A person that is truly free in life doesn’t

try to balance the good and evil inside...., [but] fearlessly fights the war between ... heart and mind, by choosing one path of standards to live by that will end suffering for [all]....” *Shannon Alder*

**Living the Questions:** Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. Was balance valued in your family when you were young?
2. Growing up, was “doing” or “being” valued more? How did this affect you? Have you been able to balance doing & being? To what end?
3. How have you been juggling the balls of work, family, health, friends, and spirit? Given your stage in life, how would you prioritize these five balls? Why?
4. In your life, what is in balance and what is out of balance? If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make? Since you don’t have a magic wand, what are key steps that you can implement?
5. In your work life, how have you negotiated a “work-life” balance?
6. In terms of maintaining balance, what is most helpful? What do you “hold on to” to keep your balance?
7. How can we model balance for children?
8. Given the concept of the Sabbath, how do you carve out Sabbath moments to refresh and renew?
9. There is a saying: “Sometimes I sit and think; sometimes I just sit?” Are you able to just sit and reach a place of stillness? Why/why not?

**Deeper Listening:** If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

**Checking-Out:** One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

**Extinguishing Chalice:** (Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison) *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

**Closing Words:** Rev. Philip R. Giles (In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

## Families & Communities

(Continued from page 6) **Polarity Management**

balance doesn’t apply, but they have a static model of balance. In this dynamic model of balance, each point along the loop is part of the inherent balance. Imbalance occurs when the flow stops.

Polarity management is important in the workplace, but it is also helpful in both family and community.

Families go through many transitions over time as a whole, as do individual members of the family as they deal with their own changes. Family polarities include belonging and individualism, routine and adventure, connection and privacy, conflict and reconciliation, stability and change, etc.

Likewise, communities have to manage polarities: tradition and innovation, conflict and resolution, structure and flexibility, diversity and unity, etc.

The diagram of the polarity model is two dimensional, around and around the energy flows, but it is more complex than that. It is as if there are ascending and descending loops. At times, we move up to the next loop and the one beyond it as an indication of increasing maturity in managing the polarity. At other times, we regress due to stress and more and we move lower in our ability to manage the polarity. Managing polarities is not autonomic like breathing. It requires skills like mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

Source: Touchstones

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