



Avoiding burnout **at all costs** takes work!

Achieving a well-balanced life comes down to paying attention and nurturing the four key areas of your being: **physical, mental, social and spiritual.**

by Mark Sincevich

Last night I turned to the community forum section of my local newspaper, and there was an article about a former executive who admitted that he had hated the last eight years of his job. However, in his mid-50's he was able to take early retirement and volunteer for service, first in an African country, and then later in Central America. He said some of the friends he made were the most rewarding in his entire life.

I wondered if he was part of our popular culture that works too hard and plays even harder. Perhaps he wanted to seek a deeper meaning in his life. Many people who work very hard to advance in their careers and strive only to accumulate an income find that they have led a life that just isn't balanced. I believe that an imbalanced life is also a life that lacks a deep meaning. It isn't any wonder that many heart attack victims are recently-retired men who don't know what to do with



the rest of their lives.

How can we become successful in our careers while at the same time becoming balanced in our lives? First let me say that "achieving balance" is definitely not a destination; rather, it is a slowly evolving process. Being balanced means being more aware of the different aspects of life and more aware of who you

are. This allows us to be more holistic or more of a "whole individual." A characteristic of a holistic life is living "the good life." The Italian name for this concept is *la dolce vida*.

If balance is a journey and not a destination, then how do you begin?

I believe that in order to start, you need to think about how to be more balanced every day, not at some point in the future. If you want to eat healthier, you wouldn't start in six months, you would hopefully start slowly making changes now! Balance is a process of gradual change, not something that is drastic. I feel that one of the best analogies to illustrate this point is

through the recently updated USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Food Chart. We know that to achieve a healthy diet, we must eat protein, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains every day. The same is true with having balance in your life. Except, instead of having four food groups, there are four basic areas of life: physical, mental, social and spiritual. If you think about these aspects every day, you will start to incorporate these into your daily life.

Achieving **physical balance**

The first area of balance in life is the physical, and that includes both exercise and diet. One of my best friends told me that he runs a marathon every year, and he said that crossing the finish line was one of the best feelings that he ever had in his life! I asked him to describe his training regimen. He said you need to start training slowly in April for the race, because your body needs to be in shape for the big event by October. While I believe that completing a marathon just once would be an accomplishment, he wants to use the goal of training for the race every year as a way to stay in shape. I thought that this was an excellent idea, especially since you can't just run a marathon tomorrow. It is a gradual process that builds upon prior small successes.

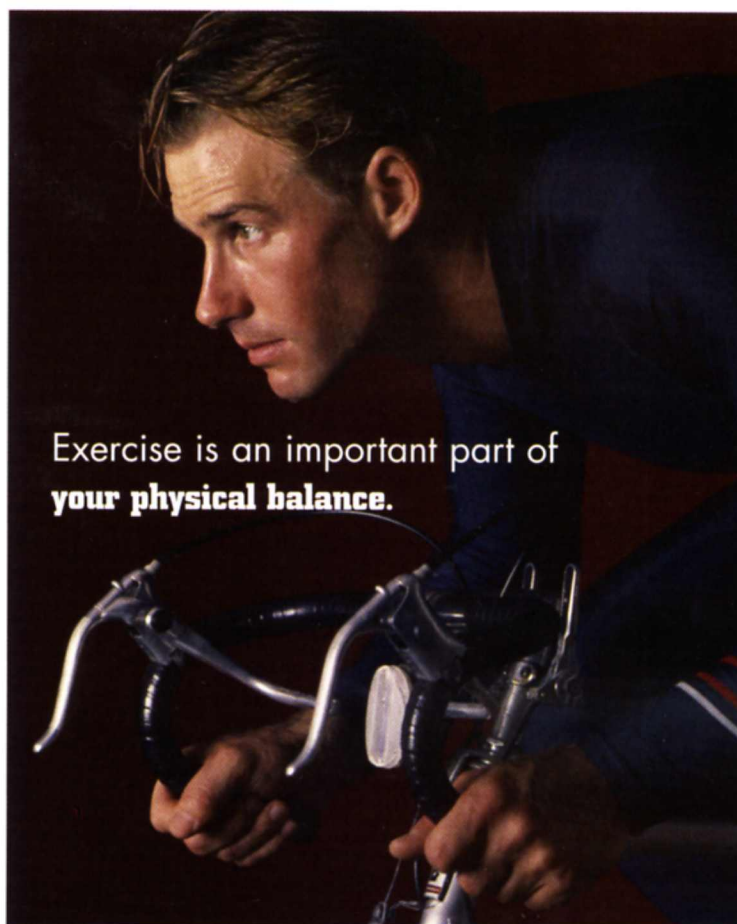
However, do you think that he would be able to finish the race if he didn't pay attention to his diet? If we don't focus on the fuel that powers our body, we will eventually have health problems. When I travel, I always order low-fat, low-cholesterol meals on airplanes. In addition, I pay attention to how I feel after eating. I have noticed that some foods make me feel sluggish, so I try to avoid these. Also, sitting on an airplane for many hours makes my muscles feel very cramped. I bring my workout clothing on every business or personal trip to keep myself limber, to keep the excess weight off, and to have a sharp mind. Clearly a key component of balance is frequent exercise and a consistent, healthy diet.

The **mental** aspect of balance

Another area for balance in life is the mental aspect, which involves education and self-improvement.

How often have you waited in line at the airport or at the home improvement store without anything to read? I make sure that I have my journal, a book or a magazine with me at all times. I used to waste many hours sitting in doctors' offices while waiting for my appointment. Now, after I read a good book, I add it to my bookshelf! Seek out your local bookstore and browse the stacks instead of working out your thumb by channel surfing.

Another way to build knowledge is through employee education benefits. Many companies pay for



Exercise is an important part of **your physical balance.**

continuing education as a benefit of employment, yet most employees don't take advantage of this free benefit. Also, a concept espoused at the National Speaker's Association is to form a "Master Mind Group." A Master Mind Group is a collection of people who get together on a regular basis to talk about how to improve their lives or their businesses. If you aren't a member of a Master Mind Group, take the initiative and start one of your own. Be creative in how you can improve the mental aspect of your life. I remember my grandmother doing crossword puzzles even into her 80's. She retained a sharp wit and intellect by keeping her mind active.

Cultivating your **social life**

The next area of a life in balance is paying attention to the social aspect. This includes getting together with your family and friends on a regular basis and providing service to your community.

I was invited to many social gatherings over the years and noticed that some people always stuck to a theme for their parties. I decided several years ago to come up with a yearly wine tasting. My wife and I pick a country or region of the world and set up 10 to 12 tasting stations around the house. It is a great way to reconnect with people we haven't seen in a while, and it's a way to thank our friends for inviting us to their parties. Make sure you stick to the date and time for the party. This commitment to your personal schedule



Get in sync with your
spiritual self for **good health.**

needs to be extended to friends that you see on an individual basis and especially to family members. If you don't set your own limits and priorities on your personal and professional life, then somebody else will set them for you.

How do you give back to your community? A former neighbor has been a loyal Knights of Columbus volunteer for more than 30 years. Many times a year, I speak to groups or associations for free in the hopes of inspiring others. Also, I am a member of a non-profit organization that helps to promote the responsible use of our environment. I really like the slogan that I see on some bumper stickers that says, "Think Globally. Act Locally." What would you like to do locally? Pick up the telephone and call to volunteer in something you are passionate about. It could change your life.

Cultivating your **spiritual nature**

When I mention the word spiritual, what do you think of? If you are like a lot of people, you might think that spiritual has something to do with religion. It may, but I feel that it has a lot more to do with how you get in touch with your inner self. It is about following and listening to your own path in life. The spiritual area of life needs to be nurtured in order to achieve balance. Paying attention to the spiritual provides a way to have a deeper meaning to life.

When was the last time you had the opportunity to take time out just for yourself? I asked a friend from college this question, and he answered that he takes 10 minutes before leaving for work every morning for himself. It isn't enough time to really step away from one's responsibilities and explore a new thought or direction. Many people leave one job on a Friday afternoon only to start another one the following Monday. When you take time for yourself, don't turn on your email, turn off your cell phone and get away from the office.

Writing down your dreams and goals gives them added meaning. As you refer to them, they seem to take on a life of their own. This allows you to really refine and focus on what is really important to you, and a journal enables you to get in touch with yourself more fully. What would you write in your journal to help you accomplish your dreams?

You don't have to wait until you retire to start living a life full of balance. If you start slowly incorporating the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects into your life each and every day, you might wind up in a situation where you don't need to retire. Why would you wait years to do the things you have always wanted to do? Why not begin doing them now? Living a life in balance is living a life that has deep meaning. I challenge you to begin living your life more fully in balance right now! **NHFA**

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