

Beyond Balance to Self-Care and Pleasure in Work and Life

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Unfortunately, balance in life and work can be elusive and largely unsustainable. Instead, experiment with what's appropriate, manageable proportion in your activities through authentic choices and self-care.

Sleep for Your Body and Soul: Scientific research proves adequate sleep boosts abilities to fight illness, sort and store information, learn, sustain healthy, attractive appearance, and even protect your genes. All this contributes to soulful behavior supporting caring relationships with empathy and generosity of spirit.

Inadequate sleep can contribute to weight gain, in fact. For most people, six to eight hours nightly are optimal. As needed, perhaps set your alarm for a time-limited nap that works for you earlier in the afternoon.

Keep Creating Your Priorities. Take 10-15 minutes every week or so to confirm or modify top priorities related to your personal and professional interests and needs. This process will help provide some peace of mind by avoiding the dangerous four-letter word: *more*. That's *more* as in the never-ending *do more, get more, be more...*

More is dangerous because it's open-ended and unspecific. How do you know what's enough? It distracts you from what's important and what you truly want. As mentioned below, answering your "why" could be more productive and useful, as in why am I doing or thinking...?

Implicit in these suggestions above and below are ways to take care of yourself. Experiment with them in order to enrich your quality of life for improved meaning, pleasure and purpose. Certainly, adapt them for authentic action.

As you attend to what satisfies you, you'll likely find out what is enough and why. Such investments in yourself could also limit artificial, automatic actions.

Make Effective Manageable Choices: Before doing anything significant, consider two questions:

- **How** will this action contribute to what I want for my life and to people I cherish with whom I have healthy relationships?
- **Why** am I doing this? Your answers can clarify direction, use of resources and action.

Recognizing that unanticipated, perhaps important, matters can always intrude, decide in advance approximately how much time and attention you can, want to, and will give to particular activities each week.

Use your choices to commit actual, needed time on your calendar insofar as possible. Who will you reach out to for assistance and collaboration?

Though not mutually exclusive, categories and actions to consider may include:

- Connecting meaningfully with family and close friends
- Contributing to and enjoying community
- Promoting health
- Continuing to learn
- Feeding psyche and spirit
- Attending to finances
- Engaging with cultural activities
- Expanding and deepening social activities
- Doing work that has meaning and opportunities
- Enjoying and exploring play

Recognizing the preciousness of time that cannot be retrieved, find two-fors in your activities. One example is exercising with a colleague, family member, or friend. Another is learning a new skill you'd enjoy for current or future work or play. Keep in mind that quiet, modest experiences may be just as satisfying as transitory "big bangs."

Sweet spots for work and play as you define them. Here are some suggestions for exploring how you could do work, that's so engaging it feels like play and play at things so delightful that you want to work at them.

- Describe briefly one idea for finding or creating such a sweet spot in your life:
- Discuss your idea with a few people who would be fun to include in the process. Who are they? When will you start?
- What one action will you take to follow up, individually or collaboratively?
- How much time will that take, realistically? How and when will you schedule it?
- What main one or two resources, tangible or intangible, would you need to proceed? How would you get them?
- Other actions in your interest and for self-care and pleasure that come to mind are:

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