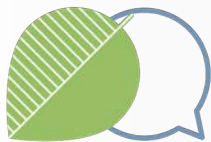


THE PROMISE WHEEL

**A NEW AND EASY WAY
TO A BALANCED LIFE**



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TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

That's it. No matter who you are, where you live, what you do for a living, you only have 24-hours in a day. On paper, 24-hours may seem like a lot. But in reality, most people feel like there aren't enough hours in a day to do what they want or need to do.



We all have busy lives with different roles and responsibilities — spouse/partner, sibling, parent, employee, friend, student, or any combination of these roles. And with so many identities, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, exhausted, anxious, and stressed.

So, how are you spending your time? Do you struggle to find balance between all these different identities? Do you struggle to find time for all the things you want to do?

If you feel like you don't have enough time in a day, feel stressed and overwhelmed, or perhaps you feel as though life has become dull and a bit meaningless, then you are likely feeling imbalanced.

What I want to show you in these next few pages are the areas you can focus on to bring more balance to your life. Then, I'll give you some strategies on how you can go about doing this.

A BALANCED BICYCLE WHEEL

I'VE COME UP WITH AN ILLUSTRATION THAT REPRESENTS THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF A BALANCED LIFE. IT'S AN AMALGAMATION OF CONCEPTS FROM THE FIELDS OF PSYCHOLOGY, MEDICINE, AND TEACHINGS FROM THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF NORTH AMERICA.

I call it "The PROMISE Wheel." To understand how the PROMISE wheel represents a balanced life, you need to know something about bicycle wheels.

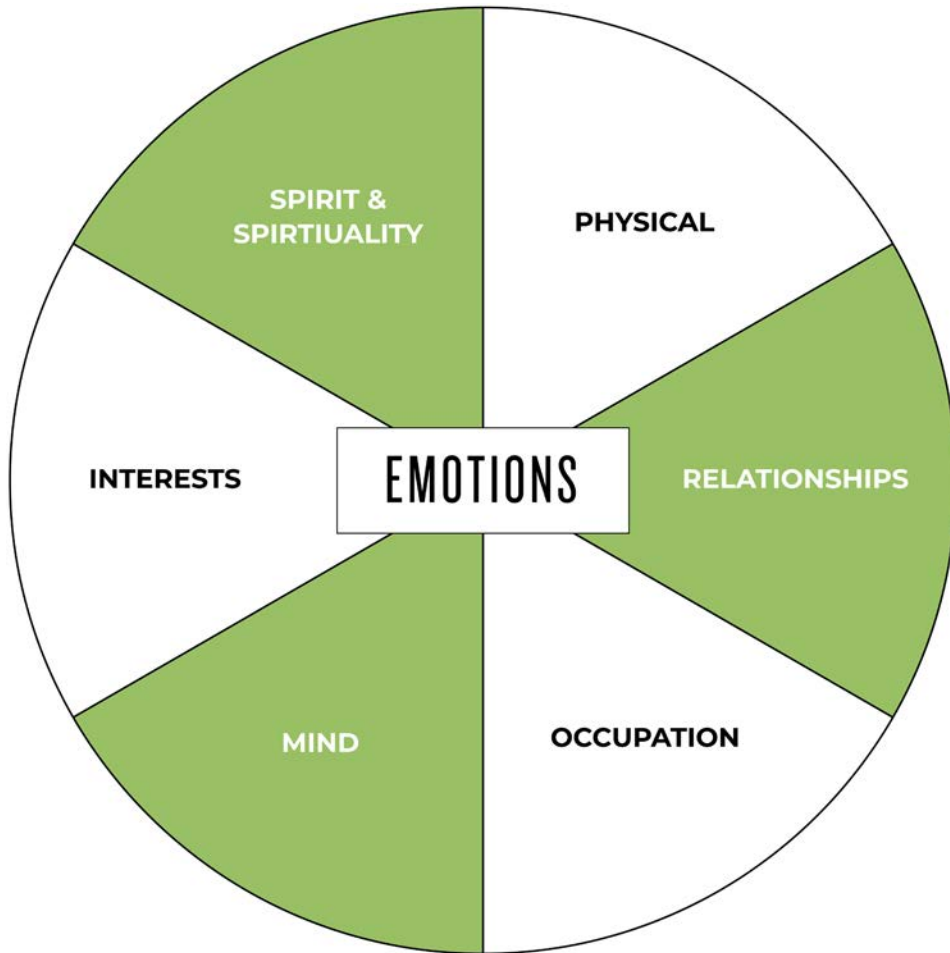
For a bicycle wheel to roll smoothly, all the spokes need to have a similar degree of tension. When this happens, the wheel is said to be true or balanced.

If, on the other hand, there is too much tension on one spoke, then it can cause the wheel to warp. To fix this, you have to tighten the spoke in one area and lessen the tension in the adjacent area.

The bicycle wheel and the process of adding and removing tension is a perfect metaphor for living a balanced life. If you spend too much time and energy on one area of your life (e.g., your occupation), then by default, you are neglecting another area of your life. When this happens, you will feel imbalanced. Metaphorically, you will feel out of alignment and warped. The key, then, is to spend comparable amounts of time and energy in the different areas of your life. To stick with the bicycle wheel metaphor, you will want to give each area of your life the right amount of at*tension*.



PROMISE WHEEL



In the PROMISE wheel, each of the six pieces (or spokes) represents an area that I believe a person needs to focus on if they want to live a more balanced life. As I mentioned above, if you spend too much time on one specific area, then your wheel will be imbalanced.

Notice that I placed Emotions at the center of the wheel. Why? Because I believe that your emotional state is the product of how much time and energy you devote to the different areas of life. Your Emotions - the center or hub of your life - reveals how balanced or imbalanced your life is at the moment.

If you share your time somewhat equally to the domains in PROMIS, then your 'E' (Emotional state) will represent empowering and uplifting emotions, like contentment, calmness, gratitude, and happiness.

If you spend your time sporadically and unevenly across the different areas of PROMIS, then you might experience dis-empowering and uncomfortable emotions or emotional states. For example, you might feel burnt-out, exhausted, unhappy, and stressed, to name a few.

Now, let's look at the different areas of the PROMISE Wheel in more detail.



PHYSICAL

This area of the wheel comprises sleep, diet, and physical activity.

SLEEP - Your sleep needs to leave you feeling rested. Quality of sleep is more important than quantity.

DIET - A big part of having a balanced life is to have a balanced diet, which involves healthy eating habits.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - You don't need to get a gym membership to get into shape, but you do need to keep yourself physically active regularly.

RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are social creatures, and relationships with people help to nurture us. Research shows that having a relationship with at least one person is part of a meaningful, fulfilling, good life.

OCCUPATION

For people who feel like they are living a balanced lifestyle, they view their jobs as being a part of their life. They don't see work as an essential thing in their life, and the amount of time they spend at their jobs reflects this. I find this to be one of the areas where we tend to spend most of our time and energy.

MIND AND MENTAL HEALTH

To have a balanced lifestyle, you need to have balanced thinking. Balanced thinking is about challenging biased, unhelpful, or distorted thoughts. * Stinkin' thinkin'* is a phrase that captures imbalanced thinking.

Another aspect of Mind and Mental Health is to ensure that you are stimulating or challenging your mind. Remember that the brain is a muscle, and you need to rouse it if you want to maximize its output. Engage in activities that stimulate your thinking. Stay curious.

INTERESTS AND HOBBIES

It's important to have interests and hobbies outside of work. Interests and hobbies can offer a healthy distraction from day-to-day challenges while helping to rejuvenate and re-energize you.

SPIRIT AND SPIRITUALITY

Spirit refers to who you are at the core, your personal qualities, and characteristics that other people mention when they are asked to describe you. Being more balanced in life allows you to focus on improving your character and smoothing out the rough edges of your personality.

Spirituality refers to your sense of connection to a power that's greater than yourself. You can define and describe this power in any way you want, but part of living a balanced lifestyle is that you work on strengthening your connection to that underlying force that connects and unites all living things.

EMOTIONS

Emotions are the hub or center of the PROMISE Wheel. Your emotional state is a barometer - a measuring tool - for how balanced you feel. When you feel an uncomfortable emotion, chances are you are not feeling in balance. Your feelings change from hour to hour and day-to-day. If you want to change how you feel in any given period, then pay attention to the parts of your wheel that can help to shift your emotional state.



STRATEGIES FOR BALANCING YOUR WHEEL

NOW THAT I'VE OUTLINED THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT, WHEN ADDRESSED, CAN HELP YOU TO FEEL BALANCED, I WANT TO GIVE YOU SOME STRATEGIES AND WAYS OF STRUCTURING YOUR TIME SO THAT YOU MOVE TOWARDS THIS FEELING OF BALANCE.

ONE

You can address multiple areas of PROMISE at the same time. Trying to get healthy, strengthening relationships, or engaging in a hobby are not activities that you have to do on separate occasions. You can address different areas of the PROMISE Wheel at the same time. For example, imagine playing in a team sport once or twice per week. Enrolling and participating in a recreational activity fulfills the Interest/Hobby area of your life; meanwhile, the exercise you get from playing the sport addresses the Physical component of your wheel; and the interactions between you and other players impact the Relationship domain. So, as you can see, you don't need three separate activities to address three areas of your life to make you more balanced. You can satisfy these different areas through one pursuit.

TWO

Your sense of balance is an individual, personal experience. The actions that might make someone else feel more balanced may not be what works for you. For example, years ago, I read that strength-training was the quickest way to get in shape. So, I started spending more time doing strength-training and weightlifting exercises. It was some of the more unpleasant times I had at the gym. I spent hours doing something I didn't enjoy that much. I did it solely to address the Physical area of my life. It took me quite a long time to discover the kinds of physical activities that I do enjoy (pretty much anything that involves direct competition with someone else). The point is that everyone's sense of balance is different, so the activities that move one person towards balance may not be what pushes you towards balance. Reflect on what works for you and engage in that activity. Take your time figuring out the activities that lead you to feel more balance.

THREE

Spending a few minutes in different areas of your life is better than spending no time at all. Between the responsibilities that fall under Occupation and Relationships (i.e., work and family, respectively), it's hard to find the energy and time for the other areas of PROMISE. But instead of focusing on how busy you are and what you CAN'T do, reflect on the different activities you CAN do. For example, if I'm unable to play squash for an hour, I'll spend 10 minutes at home doing burpees, push-ups, and a bit of stretching. If I don't have the time or energy to hang out with friends for a few hours on a weekend, I'll make time to call a friend and re-connect over the phone. If I don't have time to read a book, I'll listen to an informative podcast while driving to work. Be creative on how to make use of your time.

FOUR

The sense of fulfillment you get from an activity is not proportional to the amount of time you spend on that activity. Out of the 168-hours in a week, the average person spends most of it on Occupation. It's impossible to spend the same amount of time in other areas of your life. And to have a balanced life, you don't have to. For example, concerning the Physical domain, the consensus amongst health care professionals is that 2.5 hours a week on moderate aerobic activity can provide the average adult with tremendous health benefits. In the Mind and Spiritual domains, research in the area of meditation and mindfulness finds that 10-minutes a day of silent reflection can also have a positive impact on a person's mental and emotional health. In other words, spending four hours on activities in the Physical and Spiritual domains can provide you with pleasant experiences and emotions that are reflective of a balanced lifestyle. You don't need to spend hours and hours on specific areas of your life to realize significant benefits

FIVE

Don't be afraid to ask for help. No one succeeds in isolation. With any goal that you've accomplished, I'm sure there were people who helped in some small way. For example, as I write this paragraph, my three-year-old daughters are downstairs playing with their cousins. My parents and relatives are watching them, so I know they're in good hands. Because of this support, I'm able to work on something important to me (Interest/Hobby), and that challenges me at the same time (Mental/Mind). So, for these last few hours, I've been able to address a couple of components of my wheel. When I take a break from writing, I'll go downstairs and interact with my kids, nieces, and other family members. That'll help me to fulfill the Relationships portion of my wheel.

Now, reflect on one area of your life that you are neglecting, then go and do one small thing to change it. Just like the bicycle wheel that needs constant tuning and adjustment to stay in alignment, the different areas of our life also need attention and adjustment every now and then. The end result is a wheel that is true and balanced, making the journey more enjoyable.



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