

LIVING LIFE INTENTIONALLY

Building Your Choice Muscle

It's pretty easy to know when you're out of balance. You feel stressed, tired, or cranky. Normal things get on your nerves, and you're short with co-workers, friends, or family. Your gym membership card is buried under a layer of dust, as are your running shoes, and you can barely remember how to spell "relaxed," let alone actually do it. Or perhaps it's when your kids, partner, or friends wonder if aliens have abducted you, it's been so long since you've been seen. The symptoms are varied, but you sure do know it when it's happening. And it's not always clear what to do about it.

With demands coming from fifteen directions and a to-do list as long as a novel (but not nearly as fun to read), a balanced life feels about as realistic as Prince Charming showing up at the door with your personalized glass slipper. But in fact, creating a sense of balance in your life is achievable. (Yes, even when you're faced with more to do than you possibly have time for.)

No two people have the same definition of what it means to live a balanced life. For the person whose career is the most important thing in life, an eighty-hour week might be energizing. For someone actively involved in the community or with young children, that same eighty-hour week would be overwhelming.

However, there's one common element that must be present for everyone to feel a sense of balance: all the important parts of your life are integrated in a way that makes you feel good about your choices. It is as much — or even more — about how you feel, as it is about what you do.

“Living a balanced life is a daily practice. It's not a skill most of us are taught, but it's one worth learning...”

Hundreds of choices are literally made every day about actions, reactions, and thoughts, and each choice can have a significant impact on sense of balance. It's easy to fall into making them without explicitly considering the actual tradeoff being made.

Don't panic! I'm not suggesting you spend the rest of your life engaged in endless analysis. But do consider that almost every choice is a yes or no...to something. Sometimes it's literal — yes, I'll go to the meeting; yes, I'd love to have dinner; no, I won't be attending your party. More often it's implicit, not something you're saying out loud to another person, but rather to yourself. When you work late to finish a project, you are saying no to spending time with your family; when you skip your workout because you're tired, you are saying yes to resting; when you get annoyed at your co-worker, you are saying no to taking the time you need to act more calmly. There's no right or wrong answer, but increasing your consciousness of the implications will help you create greater alignment between those choices and what's most important to you.

Recently, a participant in one of my programs commented she'd not been able to maintain her usual positive attitude and knew it was from lack of sleep. Her company was undergoing major changes and she found herself working late into the evening, pushing back her workouts and bedtime reading to a very late hour. Getting to bed earlier seemed to hinge on giving up one or both, a prospect that left her feeling just as grouchy and annoyed as lack of sleep, since both

were equally important parts of her life. What became apparent as we talked was that the key culprit was actually her choice to be available to her staff every minute of the day, leaving evenings the only time for productive work. When she realized she was trading off several hours of sleep a night for that accessibility, she decided to block out two hours a day for focused, quiet time in her office. It took some time to break the habit of "instant availability," but once she communicated with her staff and asked a co-worker to hold her accountable, progress was well underway.

Living a balanced life is a daily practice. It's not a skill most of us are taught, but it's one worth learning and it starts by building your choice muscle. To get started, pay attention to the daily choices you're making for the next two weeks.

Take 15 minutes at the end of the day to consider the following questions:

- Which choices had a particularly positive or negative effect?
- Where do you notice unintended or unexpected consequences, good or bad?
- How explicitly did you consider the tradeoffs involved in each choice?

It won't be long before you start picking up actionable information on how your choices are affecting your sense of balance. You're likely to find surprising connections, much like my client, as well as opportunities for change. And that means you'll have what you need to make conscious choices about the things that matter most to you, and to start living your day the way you want to live your life. |



"Nice Shot!"

(Get used to hearing it)

Admit it. You want to be the best in your foursome. At GolfTEC, our certified personal coaches combine superior technology with a proven teaching approach to build a game you can trust.

Atlantic Avenue • 919-277-0163
Cary • 919-677-8385

Also in:
 Richmond • 804.747.7284 Charlotte • 704.405.1490



Expect To ImproveSM



The Raleigh City Museum

The celebration for the newly reopened Fayetteville Street continues...

Time Warp 2007

May 17th, 2007 at 6:30pm
 Briggs Building
 220 Fayetteville Street

Call 919.832.3775
For tickets or information

Help preserve our community's rich historical heritage for future generations to enjoy, and be a part of history itself as you enjoy music, great food, and a fabulous silent auction.

919.832.3775 www.raleighcitymuseum.org