

The Truth about Life Balance

By: Laura Warf

Balance is more than a state of stability; it is also about achieving equilibrium at a mental, emotional and spiritual level. At some point we all experience some form of physical, emotional or spiritual imbalance. To learn to manage imbalance, it is vital to understand its causes. Many stress management tools exist to help. The passive relaxation technique is an effective method and is outlined below.

More and more people are multi-tasking, working hard at managing their lives, balancing busy careers, active family lives and trying to fit in leisure and exercise. The busyness of life has amplified and has been facilitated by the progress of technology and the pressure to achieve more in less time. Unfortunately this modern world and fast pace has come with a high cost. Many physicians report that 50 to 75 per cent of visits to a doctor are motivated by stress-related problems. In fact, stress is a more serious risk factor for health than smoking. The eight most commonly prescribed drugs are for problems directly linked to stress.

Great numbers of people are falling victim to burnout, depression and anxiety. In the last two decades mental and emotional ailments are the leading cause of absenteeism and long-term disability claims. We live in a stressful world and the individual, usually quite resilient, is starting to falter, seeking desperate ways to rebalance and heal.

Stress-inducing situations include: moving, divorce, losing someone you love, marriage, changing jobs, diet, exercise or health. Stress often results from any change to your normal routine. It also results from a life that isn't making you happy. Change often sets off alarms in your brain, causing it to pour stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol into your bloodstream. Adrenaline increases your heart rate and breathing rate and pushes blood to vital organs for faster muscle response and quicker thinking. Cortisol encourages stress response and can continue as long as the stress continues. The stress response can help you react more quickly. But, on the down side, if you experience the constant release of adrenaline and cortisol every day, eventually exhaustion, physical pain, a decrease in the ability concentrate, frustration, irritability, and insomnia could set in. Because we are not designed to be under stress all the time, our body becomes out of balance. Constant stress pays a heavy toll on the mind, body and emotional well being. Health and happiness depend on responding to stress appropriately.

Ideally, we need to create a balance within the key life categories. Take a few minutes to evaluate your level of satisfaction in these areas from 0%-100%:

Personal	0	.....	50	.....	100
Career	0	.....	50	.....	100
Family	0	.....	50	.....	100
Spiritual	0	.....	50	.....	100
Financial	0	.....	50	.....	100
Health	0	.....	50	.....	100

Breathe In Breathe Out

Taking time to breathe is an excellent stress management tool. It activates the parasympathetic nervous system, the nervous system's physiological brake. To help you relax and enjoy greater focus and mental clarity, slow down a few times per day for a few minutes at a time to focus on deep breathing.

Often, people tend to turn to addictive behaviors when under stress which creates more imbalance. Some examples include: smoking, drinking too much, abusing drugs, or excessive shopping. When the urge to avoid the feeling is present or when your emotions are getting the best of you take a time out, sit quietly and breathe slowly and deeply into your abdomen. Breathe in for four seconds and breathe out for four seconds. Observe the emotions that are present within your body and where you feel them – without judging them or trying to change them. You will notice that after a few minutes they will pass like a cloud and you will feel more tranquil.

To keep yourself healthy and well balanced it is important to schedule some "me" time a few times per week for a physical activity that you enjoy like walking, yoga, going to the gym or engaging in sport. Physical activities combined with a healthy diet will give you the energy you need to navigate through any of life's challenges with greater ease. No one said it would be easy; life is a balancing act every day, being well requires making the right choices for yourself and taking action in the direction that makes your heart feel light!

Side Bar 1

For balance and focus the tree pose is a good choice.

Hold each side for five breaths (count to four as you inhale and count to four as you exhale)

Side Bar 2

Passive Relaxation Technique

Passive relaxation is a simple and effective. It gently allows one to achieve an inner state of relaxation and calm. It helps us achieve a form of inner focus and sense of being in the present. It brings our attention and focus to our body and breath while distracting us from everyday responsibilities, concerns and tasks.

How to do it:

Sit in a comfortable position with your back against the chair, buttocks against the seat, and feet on the floor. Or, you may prefer lying comfortably on the floor.

Pay attention to hands, palms and fingers and take note of how they feel. You may be aware of sensations like tingling, warmth, heaviness and/or lightness which are all signs of relaxation.

Then draw your attention to your arms, shoulders, neck and head, including the forehead, eyelids, cheeks, nose, mouth, jaw and tongue area. Note that the head and face are important as this is where a lot of tension is stored.

Lead your attention back down the neck, to the chest, abdomen/stomach area/pelvis, thighs, calves and feet. Upon reaching the feet, once again take note of any physical sensations.

Be aware of your breathing (the breath may have changed and become deeper, longer, slower and more relaxed).

Think of the word calm and as you exhale, repeat it three times. Approximately 10-15 seconds later, come back to the present moment, open your eyes and come back alert and refreshed!

Evaluate your experience by having a look at how you felt before and after the exercise, as well as your scale of tension (on a scale of 0-10, where 0 = nearly asleep and 10 = the most tension) before and after the exercise.

Bio:

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Laura Warf is the founder and president of LauraLifestyles holistic wellness and Inspire-Action health and fitness solutions offering services in mind body coaching, personalized fitness training and yoga instruction. She is an international presenter and a leader in mind body conditioning. Laura is an ambassador for Lolë inspiring women to "live out loud" every day. Her passion lies in guiding others on a journey of self discovery and personal development. Please visit www.LauraWarf.com