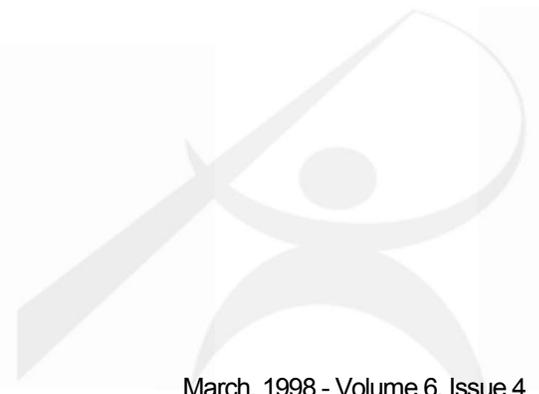




9503 Briar Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437
USA 952.831.4131

*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*



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Learning to Balance in the Dance of Life

Speed

- One can choose to waltz versus mambo. That means monitoring one's energy level and deciding how fast to dance.
- There is nothing wrong with cutting back on work hours or commitments until one has the energy for them. In fact, it is the sane thing to do.

Focus

- In traditional ballrooms, dances are played in sets. One signs up to dance a set of three similar dances with the same partner, or can choose to sit out a set. By focusing this way, the dancer deepens the experience and has an opportunity to improve skill with each dance in the set.
- At work or at home, this means choosing one or two areas to focus on and do well. Or it may mean taking a needed break to regroup before the next major push.

Complexity

- There are many levels of difficulty in dance, and it takes energy and patience to learn new moves. It is when one is learning that one is most off-balance.
- At work or at home, this means giving oneself time and permission to "wobble" while learning and experiencing new things. It also means taking a break now and then to regain confidence by doing something one does well! *CMP*

Seeking the Balanced Life

by Cathy Perme

For the last eighteen months I have sought the balanced life. I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a balanced life. There may be only a balanced *approach* to life.

The difference lies in our image of balance, and how it applies to our work and lives. I learned that "balance" really has two meanings.* The first implies a sense of stability, the second a sense of movement.

Think of a top, which can turn faster and faster as long as its weight is evenly distributed. This is the model of balance that many of us grew up with and have internalized. This model implies that if we just go fast enough, we can do it all and have it all. Balancing ourselves means being good at calendar management and to-do lists, so that we do not waste a moment of time. The belief is that we can lead a balanced life if we just divvy it up and manage it correctly. The dangers are becoming "top heavy" by focusing too much in one area, or being "off-balance" by inadequate time management.

The second image of balance describes movement. Think of a dancer that "moves forward and back ... wavers slightly; tilts and returns to equilibrium." (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 3rd Edition) This is a more dynamic definition of balance, suggesting that we are constantly stepping out, regrouping, and starting again. If we approach work and life like a dancer, we are always in the midst of falling. Every step that we take trusts our ability to keep from doing so.

Somehow, this image of balance as "dance" is more freeing to me. There is a recognition that being off-balance is a normal part of life and a necessary condition of forward movement. It also means that I need to trust myself when it comes to choosing where to focus my time and energy, rather than trying to stabilize a lot of competing interests.

Balance as "dance" is a more challenging metaphor too. It means that we must make choices and accept our limitations. As a wise woman once said to me, "You can do everything you want in life, just one thing at a time." *CMP*

My thanks to Patricia Schuckert for planting these ideas. Her business focuses on helping people integrate body, mind, and spirit for effective work and life. For more information, Pat can be reached at (612) 822-2301.