

## Balance Tips

Becoming more present in your life is a journey, and not always an easy one. Life doesn't stop the minute you become committed to change and yet change is constant. For me balance is about my being aware of choosing the changes versus the changes happening to me. Being responsible, curious and empowered to create the life I want. Here are some tips and tools that can support you to plan and reach your goal of living a fulfilling, joyful and satisfying life.

### Step one:

Learn to pause. It seems a bit funny that pausing needs to be learned, but the speed of life these days is fast. We want things now. We learn to deliver everything faster, often sacrificing ourselves in the process. You can start to change that dynamic simply by beginning to implement short pauses into your day. Pausing is much more valuable than you might imagine because it allows you to consciously step off the train. And when we step off the train, we open a space for reflection. Reflection is one of the places change begins from.

It's easy to fit pauses into your schedule. Simply begin by pausing three times a day and taking three deep breaths. You may want to pause at specific times of the day—meals, when you drive up to a stop sign, during a bathroom break, after a phone conversation. Each time you pause, notice how you feel and what you need. For example, pause before you eat and ask yourself what you need in the moment. Is it food or something else entirely?

These daily pauses will take less than three minutes. That's it. So see if this week you can incorporate pausing into each day.

### Step two:

Figure out what makes you really happy. This exercise, which I got out of a book called *How We Choose to Be Happy* by Rick Foster and Greg Hicks, takes just four minutes. Get a pen and paper and write the question *What Makes Me Happy?* on the top. Set a timer and for four full minutes write as fast as you can. (Writing as fast as you can and not stopping moves you into your right brain, the creative side.) Include anything and everything that brings you joy, from smelling a flower, to seeing a child smile, exercise, reading, travel. This is not about what you think should make you happy or what makes others happy, but what brings you real happiness and joy. When you finish your list take a look at it. How many of those things do you do regularly? How many are moments and could be experienced often?

This week incorporate into your life as many of the things on your list as you can. Start with the small ones—my experience is they are often the most joyful. Joy is an

unconditional inner way of being that is fed by laughter, playfulness, silliness, singing, playing music, dancing, and playing with a child (particularly a child five or under).

### **Step three:**

A key way to begin to take responsibility and make changes in our lives is to develop greater understanding about the needs we meet through work, play, exercise, friends and loved ones. Once we gain clarity about why we do the things we do, even if we don't change the behavior, we own it and it no longer causes dis-ease.

Let me give you an example. For many years I drove my kids to school across town and I didn't enjoy the morning ride. It was a have to—"I have to take the kids to school." But when I related it to a need—"the need for a specific kind of environment for my kids to learn in"—I realized that driving the kids to school was a choice and a priority for me. So it evolved into "I choose to drive my kids to school because I so value the education they are getting." That shift made the driving feel really different. I felt more ease every time I got in the car, knowing that I was meeting a very important need for me.

This work is based on *Nonviolent Communication*, a book by Marshall Rosenberg. There are websites, practice groups and classes on this work all over the world. I teach a variety of them in Bend. See my website [www.intobalancecoaching.com](http://www.intobalancecoaching.com) for details of upcoming offerings or [www.pcoco.org](http://www.pcoco.org).

### **Step four:**

Laugh. Yes, that's right laugh.

I know you are wondering: *How can laughter support me to feel more balanced?* Laughter stimulates the relaxation response. It supports you to feel more joyful, playful and child-like, and if done in groups laughter brings you great new friends. Don't stop there. Along with laughing, dance, sing, and do whatever creates a sense of joy for you.

To get started, research laughter at [www.laughteryoga.org](http://www.laughteryoga.org), where you'll find resources for you to laugh alone, to perhaps find a laughter club or to become a laughter leader. There is a laughter club in Bend. Check out [www.heartofgratitude.com](http://www.heartofgratitude.com) [www.playfulheart.com](http://www.playfulheart.com) for information.

### **Step five:**

One of the keys to balance is to feel the best we can physically, mentally and emotionally. How we feed ourselves is a key factor with all of these. Four of the top ten killers in America—chronic diseases, diabetes, heart disease, strokes and cancer—are directly related to what we eat and the Western diet.

I'm not suggesting that you go on a diet—just change what you eat. For great reading about this I recommend Michael Pollans' *In Defense of Food or Food Rules*, Hale Sofia Schatz's *If the Buddha Came to Dinner* or Sylvia Haskvitz's *Eat By Choice Not By Habit*. Also my blog <http://intobalancecoaching.wordpress.com/> has lots of yummy, healthy recipes and some articles about eating.

### **Step six:**

Depression and overwhelm are often related to not being in the present and not being connected to your own joyful capacity. Referencing the body to be in the present moment is key to being awake, aware and alive in your life. The body (unlike our thoughts and feelings) is always in the present moment.

Bring yourself to the now by sensing your physical body, which is always in the present moment. Take a moment right now to sense your right foot. Feel its weight, the contact it's making with the surface it's touching. Now move your attention to your right hand. Notice each finger. Next, feel your bottom on the chair in which you're sitting.

This consciousness requires you have to be in presence. Learning to feel the ground underneath you, the upward vitality, the breath moving through you, the center (hara, tanden) or the middle of you, and to sense the space around you, brings you into the present moment.

Utilizing the body as a way to be present can support you in so many ways. Begin by pausing three times a day and noticing all five areas mentioned above. Notice any sensations that arise as you pay more attention. Acknowledge whatever arises. The body is a wonderful place to live from.

These tips are a starting place. Take your time with each one. Enjoy the learning. To find out more about this process, which is based on the work of Russell Delman, go to [www.russelldelman.com](http://www.russelldelman.com) where you'll find many articles and workshops/classes that can support you. You might also want to check out my [Embodied Life](http://www.intobalancecoaching.com) program at [www.intobalancecoaching.com](http://www.intobalancecoaching.com).

Let me know if you have questions.

To being alive!

Carol