

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

TIPPING THE SCALE **7 Practical Steps to Creating Balance** **+ 1 to Grow On**

by Nina Durfee

Among the common concerns expressed by my entrepreneurial clients is finding balance, most generally between work life and personal life. Clients acknowledge their choice to focus time and energy in business rather than on family and self, yet express their concern for neglect on the personal side.

In what ways do we best achieve balance?

Acceptance – of ourselves, of what is in the moment, of the power to choose – dissipates resistance that causes imbalance. Eckhart Tolle says, “The recognition of illusion is also its ending.” In the same way, acceptance is the ending of resistance and stress.

Begin by examining your beliefs about “how it is.” For years we’ve listened to and accepted ideas from parents, teachers, mentors and public role models. Impassively, we allow these ideas to drive our actions. We operate with gelled assumptions like “work before play,” “no pain, no gain,” “successful business requires 24-7 attention.” When the inner desire to play surfaces, we quickly preempt the idea with “it’s okay to sacrifice, I can make up for lost time later, others’ needs are more crucial than my own.” This perpetuates imbalance.

Business books advise us to be ruthless in our pursuit of clients and closing of sales. Business advisors tell us that we must not relax about it – even when we’ve landed the big client, we must now work even harder to keep him and acquire more. If we pursued our personal and family relations with the same diligence and attention we lavish on potential clients, how would our experience change?

You have the power to change your self-talk and accept a different belief, one that will serve your whole being rather than bits and pieces. Instead of sacrificing quality and quantity of self care and family care, consciously attend to its nourishment even in small ways, every day. Choose an action or a ritual or a moment of recognition that takes this moment *right now* and excludes all else.

Our actions create our experience. Balance doesn't just happen. It requires conscious action. What one or two small things can you focus on for just a few minutes that will make a difference in your personal equilibrium?

Parents with good intentions send kids to football practice, enroll them in Scouts, put them in dance. It's not enough to have a child in school, we must fill his day with designed activities and focus. How can we simplify that? An hour of soccer or dance has its value, but it doesn't replace the value of 30 seconds of direct eye contact, or a full minute of listening without judgment. Your child is as desperate as you are to enjoy balance. How will you allow it?

That on which we place our attention grows strongest. A few minutes of pure attention in love, curiosity, and acceptance for what *is* in the moment goes a long way. Do this with your child, your spouse, and perhaps most importantly, with your Self.

Women are nurturers and notorious for multi-tasking. It's not necessary to remind women to attend to needs of others – children, spouse, boss, employee. They do it automatically. Equally or even more crucial, however, is nurture of the Self in whatever way makes a recognizable difference. Try a moment of each of these actions. It's simpler than you think!

1. Look into your eyes in the mirror. No analysis, no judgment, no communication, no thoughts. Just look into your eyes.
2. Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Follow your breath out and feel it stretch to the ends of the Universe. As you breathe in, draw energy from the ends of the Universe. Feel the connection of your core to all that exists.
3. Choose something in your environment that gives you pleasure: a painting, a pretty vase, a flower, the view from a window. Look at it for no other reason than to see it, and acknowledge the purity of its beauty. Breathe in the beauty and feel its connection to your core.
4. Read something that feeds your soul – a Rumi poem, words from the Tao, a note from your child or lover. Feel the rhythm of the words as well as their meaning.
5. Play music you love. Do nothing – no dusting, no decluttering, no dishes – simply listen with your full attention on the layers of instruments, notes, beats, and harmonies.

These moments of complete acceptance and appreciation nurture the soul in a way that empowers you to bring the same attention and nurture to others. You exude fulfillment, and the perfect clients cannot help but be drawn to you and relate to you.

7 Steps to balance the scales:

1. **Be still.** Stillness opens awareness and sets the foundation for strong construction.
2. **Think.** The typical balance scale has two trays. Imagine a scale with several trays and be aware of the weight distribution: home, physiology, mind, relationships, career, finances, spirituality. Identify the empty trays.
3. **Feel.** What physical sensations or emotions arise when you put your attention on each tray of the scale? Do you notice worry? Fear? Restriction? Guilt? Pressure?
4. **Write it down.** On paper, name the areas that cry for attention. Acknowledgment on paper is a catalytic step that begins the process of healing. Describe what's missing and what balance will feel like. What actions take you in that direction? List them. How will a shift in balance affect your attitudes and the attitudes of others? What changes will manifest in your mental clarity, your physical well-being, your relationships?
5. **Observe and allow.** Acknowledgment opens awareness. Awareness of the empty spaces invites options and opportunities to fill the space. Notice what appears that can help you tip the scales in the direction of balance. Notice big chances and small chances. Listen, be curious, recognize.
6. **Act.** This follows close on the heels of observation. When you recognize an option to achieve even a little bit of balance, act on it. Simple actions make a profound difference: a phone call; a few minutes of deep breathing; a walk around the block; indulgence in a piece of music; a smile or word of kindness. Act consciously.
7. **Enjoy!** Know the joy of full attention on what matters in the moment. Love it for simply being what it is – the touch of a hand, the smell of a flower, an acknowledgment of the moment in its fullness. Do this at work, at home, when you're by yourself or with others. Inner balance creates joyful equilibrium.

+ 1 go Grow On: Gratitude perpetuates the process. Express thanks to yourself for the simple process of direct attention that so completely fills an authentic personal need.

Eckhard Tolle in *A New Earth* says: "Awareness is the greatest agent for change." Bring awareness to the present moment. What will balance your scale in this moment?