

# What vision for your best possible self-do you want to create?

Making a change in our daily habits can be challenging. We can get caught in old thought patterns and negativity. Mindful Awareness is the ability to focus on purpose without judging ourselves.

**What goes on in the mind, affects the body.** We use the attitudes of mindfulness to develop different responses to life's challenges. Having a curious, open mind, being kind to ourselves, radical acceptance of things as they are, letting go of what should happen, surrendering to all the possibilities. All of these can heal our physical symptoms and cultivate a deeper connection to your body, emotions, and relationships.

## The Nine Attitudes of Mindfulness

*(Full Catastrophe Living by Jon Kabat-Zinn)*

1. **Beginner's Mind:** As a coach, being curious and not assuming that you already know something. Asking questions and being excited about how your mind works, asking questions like: Who is seeing? Who is thinking?
2. **Non-judging:** A gentle state of non-judgment, being kind to yourself, and allowing what is. Trying not to compare, label, or find fault.
3. **Patience:** Let things happen as they need to and in their own time. Letting go of the idea that you have to "get somewhere, do something, or make something happen."
4. **Non-striving:** Mindful awareness is about being, not doing, if it feels like you're working too hard you probably are. It's a way of being, being awake to what is happening in your life rather than what is happening in your mind.
5. **Acceptance:** Seeing things as they are. It is what it is. Try to be with things as they are. Let go of the stories the mind creates and accept the present moment for what it is.
6. **Letting go:** Not having a set agenda for what "should" happen. Being open to all possibilities and outcomes.
7. **Trust:** As awareness grows, so does trust in one's emotions and intuition; be yourself in every way. Have faith in how you move through the world. Trust yourself and what you know.
8. **Gratitude:** The ability to bring gratitude to the present moment, not taking things, even the smallest of things, for granted.

9. **Generosity:** The power of giving yourself over to life, to bring joy to others' lives. Giving your time and attention to life and others enhances interconnectedness and demonstrates that you care.

When I find myself in a challenging situation, I ask myself-- **what can I control and what am I not in control of?**

- **In my control:** my boundaries, my thoughts and actions, the goals I set, what I give my energy to, how I speak to myself, and how I handle changes.
- **Out of my control:** the past, the future, the actions of others, the opinions of others, what happens around me, what other people think of me, the outcome of my efforts, and how others take care of themselves.

## Finding Balance

*"There is no such thing as work-life balance. Everything worth fighting for unbalances your life."* - Alain de Botton

### How is balance related to health?

We know it is important to have balance between different parts of our lives, including work, family, free time, and so on. There are many ways to define balance.<sup>1</sup>

Some people look at it in terms of how they fit within their community, and others with how they are doing as an individual person. Each of us must define what balance means. For some people it is a state of mind, or a place of less stress. For others, it involves how much time they spend on different activities.

Many people simply say they know when they are or are not balanced. When it comes to Whole Health, balance might be feeling good about how you are doing with all the different parts of your life and your health.

However they define it, people will usually say that balance is an important part of being healthy. Studies confirm this.<sup>2</sup> For example, a study of 25,000 people in 27 countries in Europe looked at how healthy people were based on how they rated the balance between their work lives and their personal lives. People with poor balance had twice the odds of being in poor health.<sup>3</sup>

### What makes for a healthy balance in my life?

There is no simple way to answer that question, because everyone is different when it comes to defining balance. You might feel like you must devote a lot of time to work, or you may only feel truly happy when you are with loved ones. Some people

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<sup>1</sup> Lipworth WL, Hooker C, Carter SM. Balance, balancing, and health. *Qual Health Res.* 2011;21(5):714-725.

<sup>2</sup> Greenhaus JH, Collins KM, Shaw JD. The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *J Vocat Behav.* 2003;63(3):510-531.

<sup>3</sup> Lunau T, Bambra C, Eikemo TA, van der Wel KA, Dragano N. A balancing act? Work-life balance, health and well-being in European welfare states. *Eur J Public Health.* 2014;24(3):422-427.

are happiest when they are serving others, some when they are able to focus on a skill or talent, and others when they are in nature.

Most people care about all of these things, and the trick is to figure out how to give enough time to each one, based on your values. Setting goals for your health can help you to feel more balanced.

Part of working toward Whole Health in your life is to pause and really ask what matters to you. How would you answer the following questions?

- What matters the most to me?
- What is my mission in life?
- What are my dreams and goals?
- What is my calling? My life purpose?

Answers vary. Some people will talk about their faith. Some will talk about important people in their lives, and how they fit in. For others, it may be tied in more with being able to do something they love to do. It might also tie into service, or work, or learning something new. The secret to finding balance is to know what you value, and how to give it regular attention.

### **What are some tips for improving balance in your life?**

Topics like “Work-Life Balance” have been getting a lot of attention lately, because many people find that they are not balanced.

#### **The following are some tips to consider, from various experts:**

- What we want changes over time. As one couple who does work with burnout put it, a perfectly balanced life is a myth.<sup>4</sup> They talk about balance as something that is always changing, because our lives are always changing. It is like walking across a stream on slippery rocks—we have to keep watching and changing our course.
- Focus on reaching one goal at a time. Some people find it easier to focus on details. Instead of saying “I want more balance with my family time and the other parts of my life,” they set a goal to have some time with at least one special person in their lives every day. Or they make it a goal to do one thing that is fun every day, or to feel like they reached a goal at work every day. The focus of each day (or week, or month) can be a different one of those goals.
- Do not wait for a better time to try something, for a different phase of your life. Don't tell yourself, “I'll find more balance when I retire” or “I'll get to that when the kids are grown” or something like that. We do not know how much time

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<sup>4</sup> Sotile WM, Sotile MO. *The Resilient Physician: Effective Emotional Management for Doctors and Their Medical Organizations*. Chicago, IL: American Medical Association; 2002. 6/15/2020

we have, so balance should be a focus in the present, every day.

- Keep trying, without being too hard on yourself if things are not balanced. It is not about whipping yourself to find balance. In fact, it may be easier to find if you are gentle with yourself. Be careful to have realistic expectations.
- Talk about balance with others. How do your friends and coworkers find balance? What can you learn from them? What can you teach them?

## **Books on Balance**

- Drago RW. *Striking a Balance: Work, Family, Life*. Boston, MA: Dollars & Sense; 2007.
- Kelly M. *Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction*. New York: Penguin; 2011.
- Molloy A. *Stop Living Your Job, Start Living Your Life: 85 Simple Strategies to Achieve Work/Life Balance*. Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press; 2005.
- Johnston RK, Smith JW. *Life Is Not Work, Work Is Not Life: Simple Reminders for Finding Balance in a 24-7 World*. Berkeley, CA: Wildcat Canyon Press; 2001.
- Sunnarborg MT. *21 Keys to Work/Life Balance: Unlock Your Full Potential*. Michael Thomas Sunnarborg; 2013.

If you do a web search on “Balance in Life,” you can find lists of ways to increase balance in life on a number of popular websites.

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