



7 Ways to Create Balance For Your Mind/Body, Finances/Career, & Relationships

I never thought I'd end up becoming a huge reader of self-help and personal freedom books. I love exploring other peoples mindsets. Concepts like self-actualization, introspection and human behavior are endlessly fascinating. I've read so many blogs & books. What many blogs, books and sources like these at times fall short in doing is giving clear action *steps* towards reaching your goal. Sweat Nation is guilty of this too. Blogging since 2010 at the beginning it was full of for lack of a better word; Bitching about why people find themselves in the state that they're in. In those early days what was missing was the "HOW??"

It's taken many years of introspection & listening to get to where I am today. Many emails that I receive after I write blogs on introspection, body image or balance sound like this: "It's great that you have been able to figure things out, but HOW do I get there?? It seems impossible!" This is a tough one, and everyone will have his or her own unique journey through this life. I wanted to offer up some action steps that have worked. Use these to begin the process of putting together the amazing puzzle that is your life. Here are the 7 steps that have helped me and clients over the last few years transform, both physically and mentally, to arrive at a more balanced place (It's always a work in progress!)

1) **Stop the up and down dieting.** I truly believe that the default way that many think of eating is a leading cause of many of the preventable diseases that are afflicting us these days. For your food choices to truly be a lifestyle, the dieting should not be extreme. Working on "just being" without any expectations is a great starting place. Developing a sustainable "forever" eating & training plan could start to be the foundation you need to build a balanced mind/body. This might not be the solution for everyone but it's a sound place to start.

2) **Focus on something other than your body.** Sounds obvious, right? And many of you might be saying to yourself, "of course I focus on others things!" I'm sure you do, but if you take a hard look, you may be surprised how preoccupied you can be with your body image; how much time and mental energy have you wrapped up in suffering to maintain or change it, just because you think it is far from perfect. I know I have!

I love health, fitness and nutrition. It is a love, passion, hobby & career; Early on, it was all about working and making my physique more & more. Once I consciously began seeking other ways to involve myself in the fitness & nutrition realm (writing on fitness, coaching for other clients competing and building my business) the physique stuff simply became less of a focus. The transition has been stressful. You know the thoughts...."I'm not working out as much or as hard as I used to, I'm going to lose muscle and gain weight."

Interestingly, None of that has happened. Am I exactly the way I want to look? No, but I know I don't look or feel bad, and at the moment my focus is on other endeavors, which is o.k. Having another outlet for yourself that doesn't depend on how your body looks is major in creating balance in your life.

Start by writing down your top 5 interests. Beside each one, write a single action step you can take to begin developing it further. The

goal here should be marry a physical interest with an emotionally-gratifying goal. Here are some examples:

- I love basketball→Coach a children's basketball team
- I love Finance→Start a blog with financial tips from your point of view
- I love Meeting People→Take a course on human behavior on coursera, lynda. There are many options these days for your learning pleasure
- I love working with kids→Start a mom's exercise group with all the kids in jogging strollers
- I love being a fitness competitor & fitness model→Learn the behind-the-camera stuff, like lighting, photography or even how to scout and train other models
- I love personal training→Start a blog on what exercises can do for people's bodies.

3) Read, Simple right? It's amazing how you will notice how much better you think and speak when you read. Reading is cool. And I don't mean novels (though that is certainly fine too), choose books on topics you might be interested in, such as personal development, finances & self-help.

It took me a while to get the hang of this, and I was not a big fan at first, but then I discovered audible & podcasts and very quickly I found that immersing myself in something new began to feel *empowering*. It's like going back to school, but you actually want to pay attention. Learning new insights helps us to see possibilities and gives us perspective. I read a book a week typically. Some of my favorites and more insightful reads include:

- "The 4 Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz
- "The 4 Hour Work Week" by Tim Ferriss
- "The Game" by Neil Strauss
- "The Truth" by Neil Strauss

- "The Personal MBA" by
- "Mating In Captivity" by Ester Perrel
- "The Richest Man In Babylon" by David Eagleman
- "Love Factually" by Duana Welch
- "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill
- "Zen & the art of motorcycle maintenance" by Shawn Achor
- "Crush It" by Gary Vaynerchuk
- "The Art of learning" by Josh Waitskin
- "Switch" by Dan & Chip Heath
- "Good to Great" by Jim Rohn
- "Speak Like Churchill, Stand Like Lincoln" by James Humes

4) Go inside. Learn to take time alone to really get to know yourself. A lot of us take this for granted and think that just by *being*, we are *knowing*. Self-actualization actually takes a lot of conscious effort. I find that the more I go within, the more understanding I get and the more gentle I've become on myself. It's like by having a better understanding of where I am coming from—my inner workings—I am able to stop when I notice I begin the negative self talk. Remember, being gentle on yourself doesn't mean you give up and throw in the towel. It simply means you give yourself space, time and permission to work through your insecurities and struggles. Don't expect perfection, it is impossible. Instead, expect *imperfection* and congratulate yourself when you recognize new insight. Take this next quote with you. "Imperfection is perfection."

Below are some questions to ask yourself to get to know yourself better. Remember to be honest with yourself, no one will see your answers and no one will be there to judge you (except you! try not to!) If you can't be honest with yourself, there will be no growth:

- If money were no object, what job would I want/what would I do for the rest of my life?
- If I had nothing to do all day, no obligations, no one else around, what would I spend the day doing?
- If we asked an acquaintance to describe you with 3 words, which words would they choose?
- If we asked you to describe yourself with 3 words, what words would you choose?
- Is there a discrepancy between the answers to the last 2 questions? Why do you think that is?
- If you can be honest with yourself, what 1 or 2 things about your life would you change?
- Do you have any regrets? If you knew no one would judge you, what one confession would you make? Do you have any?
- What is your biggest fear in life?
- What is your biggest relationship fear?
- What one accomplishment are you the most proud of? Why? What does that accomplishment say about you?

- What is the happiest memory you have? What feelings did you have in that memory? Why was it those feelings that made you feel fulfilled?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Physically? Financially? Personally?

5) Give up expectations. As soon as you set expectations for things that may be out of your control (such as how someone will react to something, or what someone might (or *should*) do or say), you are at the mercy of the situation and your happiness or misery is now out of your hands.

Setting expectations for yourself and others is different than goal setting. People will say, "I have to have expectations! Or else I will just give up!" that's simply not as true as some believe it to be. Setting goals is a worthwhile activity and it keeps you focused, and with direction, but the idea that we can really KNOW, for sure, what an outcome will be is impossible. Cherish the journey, enjoy the process but don't be attached to the outcome. Here is an activity to get you thinking about the specific expectations that you have set up for yourself (consciously or unconsciously) and how to break them down. Some of these may not apply to you or you might resonate with many of them. Once again, there is no judging here, just simply insight:

Topic	What is your expectation about this topic?	Who/what helped to form it?	What would be the outcome if you didn't attain it?	Could you live with that? What would that mean?
Your Body				
Your spouse/partner relationship				
Your family/place in family				
Your intellect				
Your social character				
Your financial success				
Your career prowess				

6) Focus on happiness. Pull yourself out of the "victim mentality." Immerse yourself in the art & practice of happiness, find out what it is really about and give up being miserable. It's as simple as that. CHOOSE to be a person that doesn't want pity or "poor me" attention. It is human nature to want people to relate to us ("Can you BELIEVE this happened to me??"), and you can certainly go around getting a hundred people to agree with you that you have been done

wrong or got the short end of the stick, but gathering your pity party around you ultimately leaves you powerless. There is nowhere to go from there. No action to take, no growth to be achieved. You are at the mercy of the situations that happen to you. Instead, take the situation on using your own powerful thoughts. Create situations. In other words work on being proactive instead of reactive.

To this day, this is THE #1 most important lesson I have learned and I credit the author Josh Waitskin and his book "The Art Of Learning", as well as few very important coaches and mentors, with helping me to understand this. I don't always get it right, not by a long shot, but it is a daily practice. Since I started actively engaging this—really looking at how I interact with the world—I have never been happier. It's been a conscious effort. People aren't just "happy people" or "miserable people" by nature—there's a *choice* made at some point, consciously or unconsciously that makes us what we become.

To get started in the right direction, I recommend reading the book, "Happier" by Tal Ben- Shahr. It was one of the first books written in the positive psychology realm and is a great overview of the science of happiness and how to generate it in your own life. There is nothing more satisfying than the feeling that you have control over your own happiness. And guess what? You absolutely do.

7) Seek out people that are doing it better than you. Ask any successful person and they will say that it is vital to find a mentor/coach who is doing what you want to do, except doing it better than you. This can be tough, since most of our friends and colleagues are at our same level in terms of age, financial success, place in life, etc. Here are 3 ways to begin searching out people who you can learn from:

1. *Self-evaluate.* The first step is for you to decide where you want to go. For me, I always want to jump into a million directions, so the key is narrowing down my focus. It's not that you can't

do everything you want, it's just about prioritizing the order to do them in. first decide what you want to do and be as specific as possible. The more detail you can describe it in, the easier it will be to see yourself doing it and eventually the more tangible it becomes. Second, create a list of at least 3 people who are doing it better.

2. *Ask for help.* Many times we will get caught up in our pride and not want to admit that we need help (and we probably don't if we don't want to grow and get better). Recently I engaged another professional who is doing what I want to do, except she is way beyond me. It was hard at first to swallow my pride and admit that I didn't have all the answers, but...of course I didn't! How could I expect to grow without learning from people who have already been there? It was not hard to ask once I resigned myself to the fact that I cannot get to the next level without a mentor or coach who has walked the walk.
3. *Pay up.* This is tough, especially when there is so much you want to spend on. It is hard to justify spending money on self-education & coaching. But, this truly is the piece that separates the crowd. Those who are willing to put their money where their mouth is and realize that it's an investment in their future are the ones who are able to push ahead in the end. Remember the coach I sought out? Well I paid dearly to access her expertise and it was worth every penny. Besides, if someone has something valuable to teach me, don't I owe it to him or her *and* to myself to pay for that value? Now, if you can get what you need for free, then by all means, but begin to wrap your head around the fact that if you want to get to the next level of success (in whatever realm), you may have to invest financially in yourself to reach it. I love this quote from renowned

business coach and author Brian Tracy: *“Invest three percent of your income in yourself (self-development) in order to guarantee your future.”*

Whew...this is a good & detailed report. Don't attempt to do everything at once. Choose one item and spend a couple weeks working through it. Come back to it for a few minutes every day, re-read it, apply it to your biggest challenges and ruminate. Honestly, with this stuff, simply being mindfully aware of an issue, consciously *thinking* about it, is progress. Just bringing it “to mind” IS working on it. Then begin the action steps to achievement. Here's to you and to your success...Keep the Dream Alive, Make The Dream A Reality....LIVE THE DREAM!!!!

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