

How Balanced Is Your Life? **By Jeffrey Bornstein, MS, LPCC**

Do you ever feel like your life is focused on career and family, with no time or energy for other activities or interests? While career and family are definitely important, balancing your life can improve your physical and mental health. Ironically, by diverting some of your time and energy away from career and family into activities like physical exercise, meditation, and community service, you may actually improve your performance at work and enrich your experiences with your family.

According to Jane E. Myers and Thomas J. Sweeney, authors of *Counseling for Wellness: Theory Research and Practice*, leading a more balanced life is the foundation for well-being and mental health. These authors created a model called the Wheel of Wellness which graphically depicts how building a lifestyle based on life tasks or “spokes” can improve health and wellness. Building on this model, I have suggested the following spokes to focus on in order to bring some balance into your life.

Spoke 1: Spirituality – Spending time contemplating and exploring your connection to the universe can bring perspective and peace into your life. This can be done through religious activities like praying and reading religious texts. It can also be done through meditation, reading philosophy texts, and yoga.

Spoke 2: Physical Health – There is a strong connection between physical health and mental health. By spending at least 30 minutes a day in physical activities like jogging, walking, and climbing stairs, you may find that you will have more energy, more positive feelings, and feel more relaxed.

Spoke 3: Family and Friends – Spending time with the ones you love can improve your sense of self and belonging. Family and friends are also resources that can enrich everyday experiences and help you through tough times. Again, family and friends is only one spoke. Putting too much focus on your loved ones can feel like a burden to you and them. It is important to have boundaries with loved ones so that you have time and energy for your other spokes.

Spoke 4: Work – A job / career can give you a sense of purpose and help you feel productive. Work experiences can also be opportunities to learn about yourself and to connect with others socially. Remember that work is only one spoke and cannot support the wheel of wellness by itself.

Spoke 5: Leisure – Many people put leisure activities low on their priority list and, as a result, rarely engage in them. However, scheduling some “me” time into your day to watch television, read a book, or play a game can actually recharge your batteries and help you be more focused during work or when engaging in family activities.

Spoke 6: Community Service – Helping others not only helps your community, it can help your mental health. Giving back to the community can raise self-esteem and create

a sense of belonging. The key to positive community service experiences is to find opportunities that interest you and are in alignment with your values.

When you would like to invite greater balance into your life, give me a call on my confidential voicemail at **(323) 362-6555**.