

HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

August, 2011 * Permission to copy granted

2nd of a 5-Part Series on Balance...

Balance is about discipline, forgiveness, and creativity. It's about knowing who you are - what do you like? What don't you like? Do you set limits with yourself? With others? With your children? Do you know what you're good at...and do you do it?

Last month we looked at the BALANCE OF FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY. **This month we will be taking a look at the BALANCE OF FAMILY.** Remember, the key to understanding balance is admitting to yourself that something is off-balance; something needs tweaked.

In this 5-part series, we are learning to achieve balance so we can experience the long-lasting effects of balance throughout our lifetime. With this, we can also pass this practice of balance to our children, our friends, family, co-workers, and anyone we interact with.

When looking at the "whole self", remember the five areas of balance: friends & community,

family, work, self, and spiritual beliefs/practices.

Also remember the order or importance is up to you; it's according to your beliefs and your worldviews. Oftentimes, these areas overlap, which is expected – there's no right or wrong way to look at this.

I want to keep putting in front of you the physical part of balance as a reminder of the importance of the mind-body-spirit connection and how it plays a vital role in our lives: **As humans at a very basic level, we come alive when our bodies and brain are in a state of pleasure. Physiologically, the part of the brain that operates this drive in us is the Limbic System.**

This is a primitive, vital Limbic system in our bodies. It helps Control Emotions, Hormonal Secretions, Moods, Motivation, Pain and Pleasure Sensations. This state of pleasure could be anything from laughter to anger; having sex to eating some really good chocolate; cuddling with our kids to exercise.

When we submit to this basic need or this basic drive that is stored deep within us, we can then learn to unfold our tighten muscles, overworked cells, and our tired bodies...all in the name of balance. This is a very healthy habit to develop! This is important physically because of the above reasons. It is also so important because it taps into the emotions in us, thus affecting our relationship with self and others.

Let's begin looking at FAMILY:

When we look at balancing family, three areas come into play. We're looking at:

1. You and your spouse or partner,
2. Your children
3. Your extended family

You and your spouse/partner are the most important unit in the family. That's difficult for some people to hear because too many times children and even extended family are put before the couple. Even if you are divorced, you and your child's mother or father need to get on the same page. This may prove difficult, but remember balance

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involves creativity. So, if, for example you and your child's father are divorced, and due to circumstances you are not on speaking terms, then speak through your lawyers, set-up the legal paperwork and follow it. Or seek counseling to improve healthy communication. Difficult? Very! Needed? Absolutely!

In looking at balance, it's also important to put the couple before the children. I'd like to share a funny short story: A rabbi said to a precocious six-year-old boy: "So your mother says your prayers for you each night? Very commendable. What does she say?" The little boy replied, "Thank God he's in bed!" Do you ever feel like that?

Kids need structure & limits. When they experience you setting limits and you providing structure, they may complain, cry, or throw a fit at times, but if you stick with it, they will catch on.

You see, physiologically, socially, and emotionally, they need that structure for healthy development and interaction with others.

Here's some ideas for making time with you and your spouse:

1. **Set a bedtime for the kids and stick to it.** They can stay up on only special occasions. It's so important that you and your partner talk and just "be" with each other every day. If only for fifteen minutes – do that.

2. **Rely on extended family to watch the kids or save up and pay for a sitter** (going rate is \$6-\$10/hour, so if you can't afford that, rely on friends, family, support like church or a club you belong to)

3. **Be creative:** picnic, go to the park, walk, sit, read, cuddle on a blanket, see a discounted twilight movie. Many restaurants, movies and other areas of entertainment offer military discounts, or student discounts if you're back in school. Watch for coupons and specials in the mail and via the internet such as Groupon.

4. **Plan a get away weekend.**

5. **Limit your children's activities.** This is less stressful for parents and children.

"Busy" can be a dangerous word. Both kids and adults NEED down time. Down time examples can be: tv is off, no one is on the computer, cell phones are turned off and not answered. Hanging out with family. What other ideas can you think of?

It is true that our society and our culture today has a busy, busy, stay-busy pulse! **So to bring balance back into your family, practice disciplining yourself to teach "down time."** Of all the different age groups, teens do "down time" the best. There's usually a lot of laughter and silliness. There's usually food involved – nothing fancy, it's just whoever can scrounge up a couple bucks for taco bell or charm their parents to get some money. Then, they share their food. It's what adults call potlucks.

It's about being purposeful when choosing family activities and allowing your children to choose activities within limits. Dance one night a week, baseball three nights a week and karate on Saturday mornings for one child is just too much!

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Not only is the child affected, so is the whole family. Balance it out.

Let's look at extended family: Remember the show "Everyone Loves Raymond?" It certainly doesn't take an expert to say boundaries and limits are crossed to the extreme, does it?

Now look at "Home Improvement" remember, Tim the Tool man Taylor? Pretty good depiction of when limits are crossed, how to rectify it, talking it out, and getting advice from the wise neighbor. Some people include friends and community as extended family. What are your views?

Now think back to the 80's..."The Cosby Show." Very good show depicting humor and family togetherness, even when there were tough family problems. Mom and dad came first, then the kids.

There was also a spot in the family for the extended family. The grandparents, for example had a place in the family, but they didn't rule it.

And, both parents knew how to get things back

into balance, or at least they tried!

Bill Cosby showed it through humor; the mom showed it through attitude, feistiness.

There's a quote by Maxine Waters that reads,

"Some people say I'm feisty. Some say I'm tough. Combative. In the community where I come from - the community of survival - those were considered good qualities."

Regardless of our backgrounds, we all have survived something in our lives.

The balance in family is this: know when to fight for it, know yourself well enough to know how to fight for it, have the discipline to do it, and stir the creativity to play it out. Does it take some work? Of course, but you already know that!

A great way to begin is to hold a family meeting where everyone gets a chance to be heard, go over fun ideas, and review family rules.

Play together and struggle together.

Remember: find out what you like and dislike; set limits for yourself, for others and for your children; know what you're good at, and do it.

ADMIT SOMETHING IS OUT OF BALANCE, SET BOUNDARIES, AND BE CREATIVE... THIS IS THE BALANCE OF FAMILY!

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