

# Balancing Act

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Mary Lou Schmidt  
*Extension Agent, Fayette and Nicholas Counties*

*To spend your time is to spend your life, and to waste your time is to waste your life.*

## Purpose

...to help participants discover ways they can create balance, reduce stress, and achieve more personal satisfaction.

## Background

When we are not satisfied with the ways things are going, when we feel that we have lost control of our lives, or when we just can't get things done, our lives might be out of balance. We have a feeling that our lives are being used up by things that don't matter to us and that our lives are less than ideal. There are many strategies to help us make better use of our time. Some time-wasters are listed in the participant's leaflet. People are different, so there may be different—but still effective—ways to handle these time-wasters.

## Plan

Planning is important. As task-oriented humans, we feel that time spent just sitting and planning is not effective. We don't feel productive and worse yet, we won't be perceived as productive. Nevertheless we need to do planning so that we will know where we want to go. Planning can be as simple as making a "to-do" list that we work on each day. Our planning should include, however, some long-term goals so we will know what we

want from life. Therefore, it makes sense that we should have some short-term goals that are working toward the long-range goals we have set for ourselves. If there is no relationship between the two, then you might want to make some changes.

Large tasks that beg us to procrastinate should be split up into smaller tasks that can be done easily or in a reasonable amount of time. On the to-do list, these are quickly marked off, giving us a sense of accomplishment. On a really difficult day, the to-do list can be marked off with a "big marker" to psychologically make us feel that a "big task" is finished.

Determine what is important rather than what is just urgent. The "80/20 rule" suggests that we spend 80 percent of our time on things that produce 20 percent of the real benefit. Time-wasters can be internal or external. That is, they can result from our own actions or inactions, or they may be generated by others. We can do something about the wasters that come from us, such as procrastination, failure to set priorities, failure to plan, attempting to do too much at one time, and lack of self-discipline.

You have to be more creative to solve problems caused by external time-wasters but it can be done. They would include telephone interruptions, meetings, visitors, etc.

## Deal With Clutter

We have accumulated so many things that pile up around us. If having the clutter around you doesn't bother you (some people thrive on it), there is something else to think about and that is the cost of storing your clutter. If you think about the cost of storing the stuff it can be overwhelming. If your basement is  $\frac{1}{5}$  of your house and it is full of things, it is unusable for anything but storage. You can figure that  $\frac{1}{5}$  of your rent or mortgage is paying for storage. For a \$500 rent or mortgage payment, \$100 goes to store your things each month.

What are you storing? Better yet, can you find what you need when you need it? Many articles in popular magazines have lots of ideas to make storing your stuff easier and more efficient.

Everyone's clutter threshold is different. We tolerate different amounts. Not having your clutter

under your control can lead to frustration and a lack of balance.

## Be Good to Yourself

Studies have found that if you are overwhelmed at work or at home but can find a few minutes each day for yourself (a bubble bath, jogging, reading, etc.), you can cope with the situation easier. Even if you only have a few minutes, you can do some things that will be rewarding to you.

*What you do . . . don't do . . . is up to you*

“...When you live as if you'll live forever it becomes too easy to postpone the things you know you must do. You live your life in preparation for tomorrow or in remembrance of yesterday, and meanwhile, each today is lost.”

*Kubler-Ross*

My First Goal	When It Will Be Accomplished

## Suggested Activities:

- Discuss time-wasters and any ideas participants have for dealing with each one.
- Take some large task like spring house-cleaning and divide it into more manageable tasks.
- Discuss ways to say “no” tactfully and graciously when you don’t want to do something.
- Share magazine articles that show storage ideas.
- Read the story about “Stuff.”
- Have participants write down one thing they will do to save time or manage it better.
- For roll call next month, have participants name one thing they have done to get things in balance.

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### “Stuff”

Every fall I start stirring my stuff. There is closet stuff, drawer stuff, attic stuff and basement stuff. I separate the good stuff from the bad stuff, then I stuff the bad anywhere the stuff is not too crowded until I decide if I will need the bad stuff.

When I am called home, my children will want the good stuff, but the bad stuff stuffed wherever there is room among all the other stuff, will be stuffed in bags and taken to the dump where all the other people’s stuff has been taken.

Whenever we have company they always bring bags and bags of stuff. When I visit my son he always moves his stuff so I will have room for my stuff. My daughter-in-law always clears a drawer of her stuff so I will have room for my stuff. Their stuff and my stuff—it would be much easier to use their stuff and leave my stuff at home, with the rest of my stuff.

This fall I had an extra closet built so I would have a place for all the stuff too good to throw

away and too bad to keep with my good stuff. You may not have this problem, but I seem to spend a lot of time with stuff, clothes stuff and outside stuff. Whatever would life be like if we didn’t have all this stuff?

Now there is all that stuff we use to make it smell better than we do. There is the stuff to make our hair look good. Stuff to make us look younger. Stuff to make us look healthier. Stuff to hold us in, and stuff to fill us out. There is stuff to read, stuff to play with, stuff to entertain us and stuff to eat. We stuff ourselves with the food stuff.

Well, our lives are filled with stuff—good stuff, bad stuff, little stuff, big stuff, useful stuff, junky stuff, and everyone’s stuff. Now when we leave all our stuff and go to heaven, whatever happens to our stuff won’t matter. We will still have the good stuff prepared for us.

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