

## **Is Work-Life Balance a Myth?**

**Patrick Williams**

Being a leadership coach for more than 25 years, an author of many books, and a teacher of coaching skills, the topic of work-life balance for clients (and ourselves) is often discussed. I even suggest the use of a Life Balance Wheel, showing the user the main categories of their life, personal and business, and to score their level of satisfaction with each. However, unlike some other writers who speak to making the wheel round somehow and getting the same high number in each category, I teach that it is a relative level of satisfaction and may change with circumstances. So, it is a measure of energy, focus and satisfaction, not a static attempt to get high scores and then achieve balance.

This was made perfectly clear to me several years ago when my wife and I attended a traveling circus tent performance of Cirque de Soleil in Denver, Colorado. This particular show uses horses and lots of jumping on to horses, trading riders while standing on the horse, twirling objects and the typical avant-garde characters of a Cirque performance. I was so mesmerized, thinking to myself, “how do they do that? What tremendous balance.”

At intermission, when they hope you will buy shirts, programs, and products, I spoke to one of the performers, who was still on stilts but selling to me. As he looked down I stated “ I am so impressed with the

balance of you and your fellow performers...just amazing...I am a life coaching and I try to get my clients to achieve balance in their life.” To which he replied, in his French Canadian accent, “ obviously monsieur, you were not paying attention...we only achieve balance momentarily...we are in a constant state of motion!”

Wow! The insight that came to me at that moment was palatable.. I think I paused in my head and was so excited with what I had just learned. I left there thinking that is really what I have believed all these years, but was not able to articulate it so well. Our clients and we can strive for balance in our activities, the things we are choosing, and unchosen change, but we do it by having a place of balance, or a center, to come back to ....a moment in time amidst the competing energies that draw us off center.

I believe it is key to have a daily centering activity such as meditation, walks in nature, yoga, Tai chi, or even reading. And it is also important to have an *instant center* to go to in our body when we are thrown off balance in our lives. Additionally, that is why people take vacations away from the routine and the usual. So balance comes from a constant state of motion as the Cirque character taught me. And our goal for our clients and us is to be purposeful in finding our center, our place of momentary balance that we can take with us and also return to.

What are the key things you do in your life to achieve balance and to center yourself in the midst of competing energies??? How can you use this in your life and work?

Peace now

Dr. Pat

Ps. Some resources you might like can be found at [www.worklifebalance.com](http://www.worklifebalance.com) and also an article by Matthew Toren of [www.youngentrepreneur.com](http://www.youngentrepreneur.com) entitled *Does a Work-Life Balance Exist for Entrepreneurs? Not Really.*(6/24/14)

and an article by Boland Jones for Entrepreneur magazine entitled *Chasing the Myth of Work-Life Balance* (1/23/15) and in Forbes magazine, *Overcoming the Destructive Myth of Work-Life Balance* by Kevin Harrington (8/04/14)