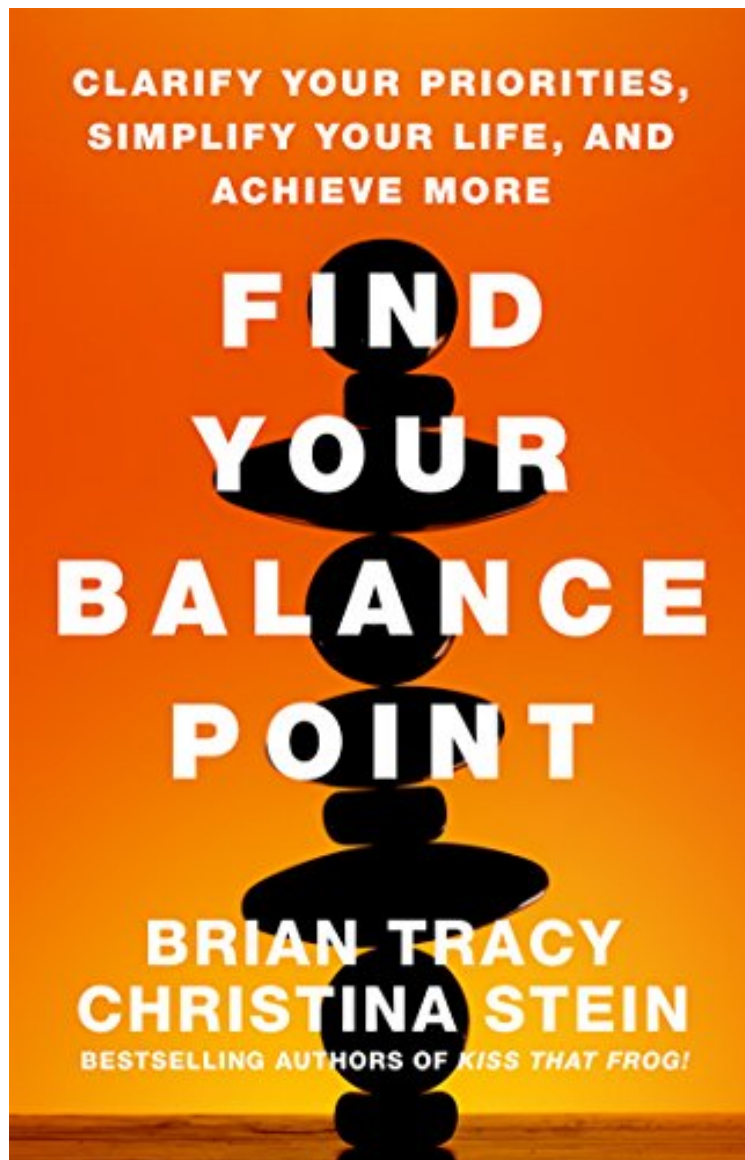


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Find Your Balance Point: Clarify Your Priorities, Simplify Your Life, and Achieve More

Brian Tracy, Christina Stein
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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. great readBy Gina NelsonExcellent book for setting priorities. I have

a much greater understanding of the way to organize my career and personal time with family. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The main content in this book is pretty much same. By Frank Choi. Skip this book if you've read the classic "the 7 habits of highly effective people" by Covey; If you haven't, consider skipping this book and read the original classic "the 7 habits of highly effective people". The main content in this book is pretty much same. It's not a bad book, but the original was much better, you might consider to choose to spend your time wisely. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Easy Read With Good Reminders. By Kathy Gottberg. I was sent an advance review copy of this book. I wanted to read it because I LOVE the title and am familiar with Brian Tracy's previous work. While most of Tracy's work is focused on business and corporations, I felt this one was a bit more approachable than some others of his I had read in the past. And while he tends to stay on the basic side of why we should "find our balance" he does offer a few tips and suggestions on how we can get there. I felt a few of the best points were: 1) According to Tracy and Christina Stein (Tracy's daughter and co-author), each of us has a balance point where we feel in perfect harmony, grounded, happy, connected to others, and where our mind, body and spirit are in alignment. As Tracy and Stein say, your balance point is when "You feel at one with the universe." While I've never thought about it exactly this way, I agree. 2) Similar to living what I define as a SMART life, a balanced life is central to our happiness and well-being. Finding it helps us avoid lives filled with too much to do, and feeling we have too little time to do it. On the other hand, having "false balance" throws people into addictions and over-consumption. 3) Unfortunately, there is no magic pill or quick-fix. Finding and maintaining our balance point takes time and effort. 4) Who you hang out with matters. Tracy and Stein boldly state that, "Fully 85 percent of your happiness will be determined by having the right people in your life." While I too tend to believe this is true, I really wish they could have provided a reference behind this claim. 5) We all need meaning and purpose to live a happy and fulfilled life. According to Tracy and Stein, "Each person craves connection to others. Creating something that helps people or providing a service of some kind is one of the best ways to feel connected to something bigger than yourself." 6) Stein and Tracy say, "In almost every study of successful, happy people, the acceptance of personal responsibility seems to be the starting point of a person's success." 7) Like the authors, I agree that it's critical to stop doing things that take away our joy and satisfaction, and instead organize our lives around those things that bring us peace, satisfaction, joy and value. Their statement, time management is really "life management" deserves to be remembered. 8) I repeatedly say on SMART Living 365.com that, "Everyday we can choose to be happy, loving and live life to its fullest—remember, we get to make it up." Tracy and Stein say something similar with, "You will be happy only when your choices and your activities are in harmony with your values and beliefs and with what is really important to you." And while the book is light on references there are good reminders between the pages. About the only thing I didn't care for was how they injected some of the old productivity and goal setting information, along with time management. That felt more like filler than anything that helped create genuine balance in our lives. I think the book could have done without it. Overall I think this book will appeal most to people who are beginning their search for a happier and more fulfilled life.

Accomplish what matters most. Because we all have too much to do, it feels like our lives are out of balance. But Brian Tracy and Christina Stein argue that imbalance results not so much from doing too much but from doing too much of the wrong things. They provide a process that enables you to sort out what is most important to you from among the many activities you could focus on. When you can efficiently identify and accomplish what really matters to you, you've found your balance point.

"This warm, insightful book shows you how to save yourself months and years of your precious time by not doing things you don't enjoy, with people you don't care about." — Laura Stack, The Productivity Prodigy, author of What to Do When There's Too Much to Do. "As a busy mother and entrepreneur, I adore the strategies and techniques Christina and Brian share to help me create a life that I love. Wish I had this book earlier in my career, but it's never too late to create inner harmony and outer success in every part of your life." — Kristin Arnold, President, The Extraordinary Team, and Past President, National Speakers Association. "In this inspiring book, you learn how to determine what is really important to you and then organize your life around your inner values, beliefs, and goals." — Dianna Booher, author of What More Can I Say? and Creating Personal Presence. About the Author: Brian Tracy is chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International. As a keynote speaker and seminar leader, he addresses more than 250,000 people each year. He is the bestselling author of more than fifty books that have been translated into dozens of languages. Christina Stein is a speaker, author, and psychotherapist who focuses on work-life balance and female empowerment. She works with individuals and couples and conducts workshops to help attendees align their priorities and goals with their skills and passions. She combines her training as a marriage and family therapist with her experience as a life coach to work empathically and dynamically with her clients. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. CHAPTER ONE Determine Your Values and Start from the Right Place. In the pages ahead, you will learn how to discover who you really are; what values drive your beliefs, attitudes, and actions; and exactly what you need to do to create a plan that ensures a life of passion, purpose,

and self-direction. **Clarity Is Essential** The starting point of designing a wonderful life is for you to develop absolute clarity about who you are and what matters to you. This means that you must be clear about your values. It seems that successful, happy people know what their values are and what they stand for, and they refuse to compromise them. Most of the great men and women of history have been admired because of their character, because of their adherence to a set of values that enabled them to overcome incredible adversity and go on to accomplish extraordinary things. And this can be true for you as well. Everything happens for a reason. Success and happiness are not accidents. Failure and underachievement are not accidents either. There are definite reasons for everything that happens, and most of these reasons are contained within yourself. Fortunately, you can control the things that you think, say, and do, and by controlling them, you can design the kind of life that you want and create the kind of future that is possible for you. When you become clear about your values and what is truly important to you, it becomes easier to make a plan for your future. People who know what they want and are clear about what they are working toward feel engaged and inspired by their lives. Developing clarity about your values is the essential first step to creating a happy life. When you become clear about these values, you will start operating from your own personal balance point.

What Are Values? Your values lie at the core of your character and your personality. Values are the foundation of your self-concept. They are like the axle around which your entire life turns. They are the primary drivers and motivators that push you forward. They determine who you are and who you are not, what matters to you and what does not. You've heard the saying "life is a journey." Let's use that idea to help illustrate the role that values play in your life. On your life journey you will travel to many destinations. Just as you wouldn't just jump in your car and drive or hop on a plane and fly off somewhere, you wouldn't start without a clear destination. Your values largely determine which destination you choose. Do you prefer warm weather or cool weather? A city vacation or a seaside holiday? Luxury or budget? Are you interested in museums and other cultural experiences? The destination you choose and the trip you take will be a reflection of what is important to you, very much a reflection of your values. These values lie at the core of the person you really are inside, your self-concept.

Your Self-Concept Your self-concept is your bundle of beliefs and ideas about yourself and your world. It is how you think and feel about yourself and every part of your life. It is the central or master program of your subconscious computer. Your self-concept precedes and predicts your performance and effectiveness in everything you do. According to humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, your self-concept is made up of three parts, like three overlapping spheres, each touching the other. These are your ideal self, your self-image, and your self-esteem. Let's look at each of them in order.

Your Ideal Self Your ideal self is a combination of all the values and virtues that you admire in yourself and in others. It is a picture of the perfect person that you would like to be at some time in the future. Your ideal self is your vision of the very best person that you could possibly become.

Your Self-Image Your self-image is the second part of your self-concept. This is the person you see on the inside and think of yourself as being. It is often called your "inner mirror"; you always behave on the outside the way you see yourself behaving on the inside. You might identify yourself by your physicality, by the social roles you play, or by your personality traits. All improvements in your outer life begin with an improvement in how you think about yourself; your mental and physical self-image.

Your Self-Esteem The third part of your self-concept, your self-esteem, is perhaps the most important part of your personality. This is the "reactor core" of your personality, the energy source and center that determines the power of your personality. Your level of self-esteem is the foundation of your self-confidence, the most important quality of all for success in a busy, competitive world. Your self-esteem is defined as "how much you like yourself." The more you like yourself, or even love yourself, the better you do at anything that you attempt. And the better you do at your work and in other areas of your life, the more you like and respect yourself. Each aspect feeds the other: the more you like yourself, the better you do, and the better you do, the more you like yourself, in a continuing upward spiral of higher performance and higher self-esteem. Your self-esteem is greatly affected by the relationship between your self-image and your ideal self. The more consistent the person you see yourself as being today is with your ideal self; the person you would like to be in the future; the higher will be your self-esteem. The greater the distance between the person you see yourself as being today and the person you want most to be, the lower will be your self-esteem and self-confidence. When you are clear about your values and your ideals and you live every day in a manner that is consistent with those values, your self-image will move closer toward your ideal self, your self-esteem will increase, and you will feel a tremendous sense of self-respect and personal pride. This is our goal for you throughout this book. The link between your self-image and your ideal self is why it is said that all problems in your personal life can be solved by a return to values, to the very best that is in you.

Select Your Values What are your values? This is a great question! How do you determine what your values are today, and how do you decide what values are most important to you going forward? There are two ways to determine your current values. The first is to look at your behaviors or actions on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour, and minute-to-minute basis. Your true values and beliefs are most often expressed in your actions. What you say or hope or wish or intend to do or be in the future does not really matter. Only your actions in the moment tell you, and everyone around you, what you truly value and who you really are deep inside. The second way to assess your values is to look at how you behave under stress. When you are under stress or pressure and you are forced to choose one action or another, your choice will express your true

values. For example, ask yourself, "If I found out today that I had only six months to live, how would I spend my time?" Your answer to this question will tell you what is most important to you in life at this moment. You can also determine what you truly value by looking at what makes you the happiest and what qualities you most respect and admire in others. Clarifying your true values is not easy. Some people choose to attend intensive, three-day seminars on the subject of values clarification to help them develop absolute clarity about what is important to them in every area of life. These seminars are often life changing for the simple reason that most people, even highly educated and intelligent people, are unclear and unsure about what their values really are or what they should be. But once you are clear about your values, and their order of priority in your life, and you resolve to live consistent with these values, you will feel a tremendous sense of liberation and exhilaration. Life will become simple and clear. You will know what to do and what not to do. Decision making will become easier. You will feel that you are becoming the very best person you can possibly be. Let's talk now about three different kinds of values: character values, life category values, and values around roles and identities.

Character Values Following is a list of character values, also referred to as "virtues." Virtues are the admirable and desirable qualities and strengths that make up a person's character. They are usually developed early in life as the result of parental influence and example. Virtues can also be developed in adulthood by repetition and practice and by refusing to allow exceptions. Read through this list and ask yourself, "What kind of person am I?" Circle those words that you believe best describe your character and guide your choices and actions today, or jot them down on a piece of paper. Also circle or write down those virtues and values that you would most like to develop in the future. This combination constitutes your ideal self.

Accepting Accountable Assertive Brave Cautious Committed Compassionate Confident Considerate Content Cooperative Courageous minded Optimistic Orderly Passionate Patient Peaceful Persistent Pious Prudent Punctual Purposeful Rational Resourceful Respectful Risk-taking sacrificing Servicing Sensitive Sincere Spontaneous Steadfast Strong Tactful Tolerant Trusting Trustworthy Truthful Vital Wise Zealous

look at your selections and choose the one value that is most important to you. (This is not easy!) Continue through your selected values and decide which is your second most important value and then your third, fourth, and fifth. This is a great exercise and an excellent starting point. Which are the most important values in your life today? (Write them here or on a piece of paper.)

1. _____ 2. _____
- _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
- _____ 5. _____

Identifying which values are most important to you, and their order of importance, helps you live a more successful, balanced life for three reasons. The first reason is that the values you admire and desire the most are unique and personal to you. To achieve balance in your life, you need to be clear and committed to what matters most to you. The second reason is that the more your daily words and actions are consistent with your most deeply felt values, the higher will be your self-esteem and the more you will like and respect yourself. The more self-esteem you enjoy, the greater will be your self-confidence. The more self-confidence you have, the more energy and determination you will have to move forward and achieve your goals. Nothing will stop you. The third reason why clarity regarding your values is essential is that to determine how to set goals and priorities, you need to know what you really want and care about more than anything else.

Life Category Values We are shaped and motivated by the qualities of our character and the values we place on each different part, or category, of our lives. In achieving balance in our day-to-day lives, it is usually the life category values where we strive to achieve balance the most. Before you can achieve success in your personal and professional lives, you must first determine what "success" looks like for yourself. Finding your balance point requires that you decide what is most important to you among these categories and then where and how you should invest your time and energy. Look through the following list and circle the words or phrases that describe the most important elements of your life, both present and in the future, or write them down on a piece of paper. You may select all of them or only a few; there is no right answer—only what is right for you.

Romantic partnerships Family Children Parents Friends Social life Money Work Career Home Travel Material things Religion Health Fitness Education Spirituality Community

Which are your five most important categories, those areas that take up, or that you wish would take up, most of your time?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
- _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Does your life reflect all the categories you listed? Are there certain categories that are important to your happiness and fulfillment but to which you are not devoting enough time and energy? You may find that you selected many of the categories, but not all of them are of the same importance to you. Later we will discuss how to prioritize your values and live a life that accurately reflects the significance you give each one. In addition, you will learn how to establish your values and priorities and how they may change in importance throughout your life.

Role and Identity Values When asked to describe themselves, people often mention the roles they play and the jobs they do. Just as certain virtues are more meaningful to us than others, we also place different degrees of importance on our various identities and activities. Each person usually has multiple identities, each of which is more or less important than the others. One person may value creative expression and identify strongly with being an artist. That same person may identify her role as a professional to be more central to her overall

identity. She would therefore describe herself first as a professional and second as an artist. For many women, this is a particularly challenging exercise. Often, women who establish themselves in a career and then stop to raise a family find themselves struggling between their role as a professional and their role as a mother. For these women, determining how to divide their time is absolutely essential to establishing their personal balance point and to feeling happy and confident about how they spend their time. As you go through the following exercise, be aware that a significant characteristic of values, especially our values around roles, is that they are constantly changing and evolving. At some points in your life you may identify more strongly with one role and then at a later point you may find yourself or imagine yourself connected to another. Circle or write down on a piece of paper the roles that you identify with and that are important to you now or that may be important sometime in your future. Child Mother Father Grandmother Grandfather Wife Husband Friend Teacher Student Leader Employer Employee Partner Artist follower

Of the roles you selected, which one do you identify with the most? Second most? Third? Fourth? Fifth? You can list roles relevant to your life right now or a combination of the roles you play now and the roles you hope to play in the future.

1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____
 5. _____

Becoming clear about what drives you, what you value, and how you prioritize those values is essential to creating your personal life design and learning how to operate from your balance point. Without crystal clear awareness of what truly matters to you, your path will be unclear, your foundation will not feel solid, and you will never experience the true balance and harmony that is possible for you. Once you take the time to think about the values discussed in this chapter and acknowledge how integral they are to your overall sense of happiness, you will probably want to change the way you live your life and get yourself back on track. You will see clearly what you need to change to begin operating from your own balance point. This clarity will enable you to feel more empowered to become the kind of person who can achieve any goal you set for yourself.

Prioritizing Your Values

You need to be clear about your values if you want to live a happy life. You must also be clear about the priority in which you organize your values. Which value is most important to you? Which value is second most important to you? Which value is third, and so on? This order of priority largely determines the structure of your personal-ity; what you think and feel, what you say, and what you do; especially when you are forced to choose between one value and another. Imagine that you know two people, one person who values security above all else and another person who values opportunity or new experiences above all else. Here's the question: Would there be a difference between these two people in terms of their character and personality? Would the difference be small or large? The answer is that the difference would be enormous. The two people would be completely different from each other in their beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and behaviors.

Two Examples

Imagine two men: one is a lawyer and the other is a salesman. The lawyer goes to work early in the morning and comes home late at night. He often has to work on projects during the weekend and has little extra time to spend with his two young sons. However, he loves his job and feels fully engaged at work. He feels proud of his accomplishments and knows that he is providing well for his family. The salesman travels extensively for work and is often away from home several days at a time. When he is home, he divides his time between his family and professional projects he is working on. He too places tremendous value on his ability to provide for his family. Both men highly value their careers, take pride in their achievements, and feel good about their accomplishments. You may think that because both of these men spend the majority of their time working, their lives are out of balance. But the reality is that these men both enjoy their work and highly value their ability to provide for their families. They are actually living their lives in alignment with their highest values and are therefore in balance. No two people operate from the same balance point. People are different and contribute in unique ways to society. No two are exactly the same. Learning to operate from your balance point requires that you stop comparing yourself to others and start to appreciate the differences that exist among people. What is right for you and what is right for someone else do not have to be the same. When you are clear about your own personal values and you decide to live by them, without compromise, you can feel calm and confident no matter what others do or say. You can then find and maintain your own balance point.

ACTION EXERCISES

1. Every day for a week, ask yourself, "What do I value the very most in life?" Your first answers to this question may be automatic but not necessarily accurate. Keep asking, and let your thoughts go where they lead you. You may be surprised at your final answer.

2. Imagine that you could have two words inscribed on your tombstone to summarize the kind of person you became in your lifetime. What two virtues or qualities would you want inscribed after the words, "Here lies (you). He/She was (two qualities)."