

BLEND YOUR OWN SMOOTHIE: LIFE ISN'T ABOUT BALANCE

Self-help books are great, they tell you exactly what a perfectly balanced life looks like. Meditation every morning, followed by the perfect omelet, lunch is bento boxes with fruit cut into shapes for the kids, the afternoon consists of hand writing thank you notes using calligraphy, followed by yoga, a 10K, and a webinar with the Dalai Lama. I can guarantee none of those authors ever made it to my house as they did research for their books, the chaos that explodes before 8 am is a sight to be witnessed. I'm a Libra, I crave balance, but it doesn't happen very often in my household. My schedule is more like wake up and attempt to work out. Kid 1 gets up and puts an end to that. Kid 2 comes in shortly after because his brother woke him up, some kind of fight ensues. Eventually kid 3 wakes up screaming that her brothers are annoying. I can't even contemplate showering because the kids are "**starving**". One kid wants fruit loops, two want scrambled eggs. After I make the eggs, kid 1 changes his mind and now wants eggs too. I attempt to make myself tea but have to reheat it at least 3 times before I can actually drink it. This is all before 745 AM.

I used to do a lot of stress management presentations and would go to colleges to talk to athletes about "Finding Balance" in their lives. I have since thrown out the notion of balance because I think for most people with multiple demands at any stage in their lives, balance is a difficult dream to achieve. I've adjusted my thinking on life balance to be focused instead about creating your daily "blend" and comparing life to being like a self-made smoothie. For each commitment you have and demand on your time or energy, that's one more ingredient you need to put in this smoothie. While you can measure out exactly how many blueberries and strawberries you include in your smoothie attempting to find the perfect ratio, the majority of people don't, you throw in handfuls and hope it tastes good. There's no exact recipe. What works for my taste buds might not work for yours. What you consider a balanced life might be different than what works for me. The only real prescription with the smoothie analogy is that the more life priorities you have, the more ingredients you have to successfully blend into the smoothie.

Generally, most people's life smoothie would include:

- Strawberries** = Family/Relationships (add a different fruit for each dependent child or adult)
- Blueberries** = Health
- Bananas** = Fun/Recreation/Social
- Spinach** = Work
- Yogurt** = Growth/Learning
- Ice** = Chores or other non-desirable task



The ingredients look healthy and delicious, but what if you have a lot of spinach (work) that has to be included in your smoothie and there's not a lot of space for much else and you're forced to choose just one other ingredient? A spinach and ice smoothie isn't that appealing to me, spinach and banana could be ok but then I'm missing out on the health benefits of the blueberries and the enjoyment of yogurt or strawberries. When you're forced to choose one ingredient over another because your life recipe doesn't allow you to create a perfect blend, it's not easy to decide which ingredient you must sacrifice.

My suggestion is, instead of striving for perfect life balance, look at the ingredients you NEED to mix in each day and try to throw in some of the ingredients you WANT to include.

There will be days when there are way too many undesirable tasks so you decide you need some social time to make the blend better. There will be days where it's all of the good stuff and your life blend is pretty sweet. There will be days where you forget to put the lid on the blender and it's a total disaster. Instead of seeking balance and finding your scales are rarely even, strive to find a daily blend that works for you. Recognize that some days will be a little better than others but tomorrow is a new day and you can start over and work to improve your recipe.

Make it Great!

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