

Finding Balance

Imagine your life as a teeter-totter with your work and team responsibilities on one end, and your personal life on the other. Chances are the end with your work life is, at many times, heavier than the end where your personal life sits. Be conscious of this imbalance and work to bring the two sides in line. In exploring this freedom, we'll discover ways to find joy, simplify living and make time for YOU.

20 Ways to Find Joy

Looking for a little more joy in your life? Then you need to know a secret. Happiness (at least the momentary kind) has everything to do with a new job or a flattering haircut. True joy, on the other hand, isn't about what's going on around you so much as within you - if you close your eyes and take a minute, you can reach down deep and access its indelible glow. So take a breath and notice the brighter colors of the world. You can find joy everywhere, if you just pause to look for it. Sound vague? Read on for a complete set of joy-enhancing instructions.

1. Log On.

Type J-O-Y into your favorite internet search engine. Now, look how much joy is out there! You'll find links to everything from spiritual joy to the site www.joyofpi.com, about the pleasures of mathematics. On the Web, at least, joy is apparently endless.

2. Adopt an Asian Attitude.

Wabi-sabi (odd name, awesome idea) is the Japanese art of finding beauty in life's imperfections. It's the teacup you cherish even though it's cracked, the threadbare sweater that gives you a lift, the gray that follows a brilliant sunset - and feeling your throat catch at how lucky we are to be alive.

3. Tickle Someone.

It doesn't take much: a new set of markers for your nephew, an undisturbed Sunday of football for your sweetie, a pound of French Roast for your java-loving coworker. Joy is contagious. Spread some.

4. Get Lost.

"People are happiest when they are so into a task that they lose themselves in the flow," says Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ph.D., author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (HarperCollins). Note those times you lose yourself - when you play guitar or concoct a new recipe - and you'll always be able to find that blissful feeling.

5. Test-Drive a Dream.

Always wanted to learn to scuba dive or tap-dance? "You don't have to be a Savion Glover," says Suzanne Falter-Barns, author of *How Much Joy Can You Stand?* (Ballantine Wellspring). "Take just one class. Commit to the little voice inside your head that reminds you who you are. That's where the joy is."

6. Make Your Friends Blush.

"I can live for two months on a good compliment," Mark Twain once said. Couldn't we all? Give your friends the gift of heartfelt appreciation - and watch them light up. You will, too.

7. Fill In The Blanks.

"_____ is a joy to come home to."

"_____ is a joy to talk to."

"_____ is a joy to work for."

"_____ is a joy to cuddle with."

See? And you'd almost forgotten to notice.



8. Go Ahead. Giggle.

"Laughter banishes negative habits of mind - those what ifs and why didn't Is," says Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., author of *Inner Peace for Busy People* (Hay House). Designate a "fall over laughing" night: Rent *Mary Tyler Moore* or *South Park*. Don't be afraid to belly laugh.

9. Exercise Your Joy Option.

Would you expect a marathoner to get to the finish line without regular workouts? Right. So flex your uplifting muscles. Get your daily dose of kittens, cuddles and other connections. Joy will always be there when you need it.

10. Bring Joy Home.

Re-create a corner of the world you love. Arrange a collection of stones from your last vacation in a glass bowl, or turn your refrigerator door into a gallery of inspiring quotes or photos. Put on "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony while you're composing some joy of your own.

11. Make a U-Turn

Another family member finished your Wheaties? Weekend plans took a nose-dive? Embrace the Buddhist principle that we can choose how to respond, for good or ill. Then choose joy. Take yourself to breakfast. Enroll in a weekend writing workshop. A dead end is a chance for a turnaround.

12. Eat Like a Child.

Remember Mom's secret recipe for sloppy joes? Chances are, your favorite kids meal still makes your mouth water and your heart mushy. Get the recipe, get cooking and savor the sentiment.

13. Play Reporter.

Ask as many people as you can: What brings you joy? When we tried it, one woman e-mailed about making gumbo from scratch, another about the leap her heart makes when she hears her husband's key in the door. Be reminded of the delight that lurks in ordinary moments.

14. Keep Your Secrets.

No one has to know that what restores your soul is rearranging your linen closet, listening to the rain or rolling pennies. Some brands of joy come in packages for one.

15. Rediscover Words.

There's nothing like beautiful writing to restore your sense of wonder in the world. Browse through *Poems to Live By in Uncertain Times* (Beacon), a new collection of poetry that features these inspiring lines by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gwendolyn Brooks:

"...live not for the Battles Won
Live not for the End-of-the-Song
Live in the along."

16. Break Out of the Box:

Draw a box. Inside, write down 10 to 15 facts about you: where you live, who you love, the last book you read. Notice an absence of the unexpected? Outside the box, jot down new things to learn: waltzing, making sushi, sign language. Then don't just think outside the box, go there.

17. Make a List.

Go to www.howmuchjoy.com and answer these and other questions: What's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen? When was the last time something moved you to tears? Write down your answers on a slip of paper. Stash it in your wallet. Review twice a day or as needed.



18. Strengthen Your Spirituality.

Meditate and pray daily. Go to worship services. Join a study group. Whatever your religious beliefs, seek deeper understanding and knowledge. Apply what you learn to your everyday life.

19. Be Content Where You Are.

In your efforts to seek joy, to try new things, to discover simple pleasures around you, take time to appreciate where you are right now. Even if you're in a "difficult" period in your life, there is a growth process you've gone through to get there, and a more peaceful time is coming. Be patient and accept the process.

20. Give Without Expectation of Getting in Return.

"It's better to give than to receive," we've all heard. See how much joy you experience when you give to others, whether it's your time or an actual gift, and expect nothing in return. Learn to give selflessly.

Simple Tips:

Simplicity. In our fast-paced world, it's difficult to find. Here are quick and easy tips to help ease your hectic life.

1. Just Hang Up.

Halt the spam, junk mail and stop the cold calls that interrupt dinner. To remove your name from mailing lists, write: Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preferences Service, Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735. To erase your number from telemarketers' books, write: Direct Marketing Association, Telephone Preference Service, Box 9014, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9014. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number in your letter. By law, phone solicitors must remove you from their call list if you request to be removed. As for e-mail spam, use the "junk mail filters" in your software to help curtail it. If the e-mail is legitimate, the sender will always provide an "opt-out" link to remove your e-mail address from their database.

2. Steal A Few Minutes.

Working so hard that small pleasures and even chores have gone by the boards? Starting today, leave your office five minutes earlier than you did yesterday. Continue this practice for a week or two, until you're out in time to pick up the dry-cleaning - or watch the sun set.

3. Seize The Moment.

Every day, set aside 15 minutes to clean one area of the house. By the time the weekend arrives, you won't have much work to do.

4. Put An End To Paper Chaos.

Immediately dispose of circulars and extraneous material enclosed in bills.

5. Consolidate Your Investments.

You'll reduce time spent keeping track of numerous financial statements each month. A fringe benefit: You may have a clearer gauge of your investment strategy. Go with one large mutual fund company.

6. Draw Imaginary Boundaries.

On your way home from school or work, choose a highway sign or train stop to be the dividing line between duty and domesticity, says Odette Polar, author of *365 Ways to Simplify Your Work Life* (Dearborn). Before reaching this point, feel free to think about assignments, personalities, politics; past it, let yourself anticipate the soothing scent of a macaroni-and-cheese dinner.



7. Take Three.

Your mother told you to count to 10 before saying something you might regret. But Pollar suggests taking the concept further by waiting three days before acting on a problem that could solve itself. The matter will either disappear or benefit from your unconscious deliberation.

8. Never Forget Again.

Let a commercial service remind you of friends' birthdays, your parent's anniversary, medical checkups - even when it's time to take the cat to the vet. Or utilize your PDA or desktop calendar software to set up reminders.

9. Be Ready.

Have a travel bag packed at all times with easy-to-forget items like toothpaste and hairspray. When you return from a trip, restock the bag.

10. Support Your Life, Not Your Lifestyle.

The freedom that comes from being debt-free may outweigh the inconvenience of not using credit. Cut up all but one credit card to be used in case of emergency.

11. Save Gas and Use Minimal Electricity.

Bank online. Use software programs like Quicken to pay bills and invest.

12. Make a Seriously Cheap Cleaning Closet.

All you need to clean everything in the house - ecologically and minus the noxious fumes - are: one gallon distilled white vinegar for glass and tile; a large box of baking soda for scrubbing; olive oil for polishing wood; and two lemons for grease-cutting and aroma.

13. Pass It On.

Handle paperwork, e-mails, faxes and phone messages only once. File that memo, pass that article along to your mother, fax or e-mail back immediately - or throw the thing away.

14. Picture It.

Can't bear to part with your college trophies or collection of stuffed animals, but can't abide the things cluttering your space? Elaine St. James, author of *Living The Simple Life* (Hyperion), suggests photographing your prized possessions, then throwing or giving them away. "Store" framed and unframed pictures and photos by banking them on the wall. Hang or tape them edge to edge willy-nilly for a strong, graphic look.

15. File It.

Turn your daily planner into a vertical file. When you get bills, invitations and tickets, tuck them into the page showing the day you need to pay or use them, recommends Mary Emmerling, author of *Mary Emmerling's Quick Decorating* (Clarkson Potter).

16. Trade It In.

To correct closet claustrophobia, take a tip from the National Association of Professional Organizers: When you buy a new piece of clothing, toss an old one.

17. Need a Home Office But Lack Space?

Invest a little or a lot in an armoire that opens into office space. Closed, you've got a great piece of furniture. Open, you've got a functional work space. They're available in all price ranges from low-end to high-end, to match your budget.



18. Get The Necessities of Life -

- without walking out your front door. Shop online or by catalog for everything from clothes to electronics to furniture to food...virtually everything you need is available online. Just be sure you're shopping with a reputable company, and check to be sure your connection is a secure one.

19. Prime The Pump.

Discover your personal "prime time" (are you more productive in the morning, afternoon or evening?), and do priority tasks then, advises Ronni Eisenberg, author of *The Overwhelmed Person's Guide to Time Management* (Plume).

20. Five Things to do in Five Minutes.

Sort the mail. Clean out your purse. Send a postcard to a friend. Return one phone call or e-mail. Write tomorrow's "to do" list.

21. Travel Wrinkle Free.

For crease-proof packing, according to Sharon Wingler, flight attendant for 26 years and author of *Travel Alone & Love It* (Chicago Spectrum Press): Place slacks, shirts and blazers across the length of your suitcase, leaving the bottom halves trailing outside. Place sweaters, T-shirts or cotton leggings on top. Last, fold the pant legs and bottom half of shirts and blazers back over the sweaters.

22. Light A Candle.

Candles add instant intimacy to a room. Light a row of votives along a windowsill or mantel, group an arrangement of different heights together, or mix and match candlesticks on a table to create a focal point. Candlelight hides dust, empty corners and bare walls, while flattering the most important element of all - people.

23. Camouflage Clutter.

Baskets and trunks are perfect for this task - and they enhance your decor! Baskets can hold newspapers for recycling, clothes for the cleaners, videotapes, CD's and DVD's, pet supplies or sports gear.

23. Recycle Old Furniture.

It's easier to paint furniture than it is to strip or refinish it (as long as it's not a fine antique). Find old pieces with great shapes, then paint them white or cream for a fresher look. This also allows you to mix different eras and styles easily.

24. Compartmentalize.

Keep the things you use every day, and get rid of the extras. Put related things together in the same area - for example, all your entertainment-center paraphernalia, your bills and paperwork, and your hardware. You get clutter when things start crossing over into different areas.

25. Make Small Changes to Kitchen and Bathrooms.

In The Bathroom:

- Fasten a gilded frame to the existing medicine-cabinet mirror.
- Use old silver baby cups, mint julep cups, even trophy cups to hold basics like cotton balls and swabs.
- Use silver ashtrays for soaps, and put bath oils in antique bottles.

In The Kitchen:

- If you have a window, hang a sturdy glass shelf across it to hold herb plants or display colored glass.
- Add a small, comfy chair or love seat, or if space is tight, a little stool with a cushion - somewhere inviting to sit.



26. Home Mission Statement.

Develop a sense of your mission for your home - exactly the way you would create a mission statement for your business or resume. Is creative expression most important to you? Or is home simply a place to nurture your family, a showpiece to decorate and celebrate? Having a mission helps give focus to what you bring into your home.

27. Know When To Let Things Go.

We tend to accumulate a tremendous amount because we don't discriminate between what's valuable and what's not. When you move, throw away and give away. Take only those objects that really have meaning and power. Develop the discipline to constantly weed the garden of your possessions. The shedding of things can truly be a freeing experience.

28. Connect To Your Home.

Create rituals that connect you to your home, such as arranging fresh flowers once a week, bringing in something natural (shells, branches, pinecones) scenting the room with natural essences, playing music you love or hanging wind chimes.

exerpts from Self Magazine, December 1996

Finding Time

Between pressures of work and home and everything in between, time becomes a premium for all of us. Here are great examples of how to make more time available to you by managing your activities more effectively.

1. A Little Padding Never Hurt Anyone

A cushion of comfort pads you in the right place. Always extend your estimate of the time that's required to accomplish your goal. Do this for yourself as your own internal yardstick, and estimate time requirements for all the links in the chain.

2. Learn To Say No to Others and Yes to Yourself

When somebody asks you to do something, pause before answering. Don't rush to comply. If you have to say no, do it effectively and sugar-coat it. Make your pause instinctive. Give yourself time to think. Learn to listen to your "gut" feeling. If "no" is the right answer, say no.

3. Punt When It's Fourth and Long

When others are counting on you for a project, a present, a trip, or whatever, and you find you have overcommitted yourself, don't hesitate to tell the other person that you won't be able to do what you had originally planned. Offer alternatives that will let the work get done on time. Give yourself and others enough time to punt. Don't wait until the eleventh hour.

4. Build Solid Time Blocks - Limit Interruptions.

Recognize that when an interruption occurs, it steals your time without asking. Be kind to yourself, the person on the phone, or other intruders, but be firm and keep to your schedule.

5. The Phone - Your Friend and Foe

- Use the answering machine to screen calls and save time.
- Increase the productivity of each minute by multi-processing - doing more than one thing while you're on the phone.
- Be aware of the time spent on each call.
- Set aside time to make outgoing calls. By initiating the call, you will be better prepared and can control its pace and content.
- Use effective conversation enders such as: "Before we hang up..." "You must be busy, so I'll let you go."



6. Be Reachable

Make it a habit to check your messages and get back to people immediately.

7. Help Your Family To Help Themselves

Develop ways for family members to contribute to household chores such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, doing laundry, and running errands.

8. Work Your To Do List

Do a "to do" list daily. Don't write a new list everyday; just update the previous one. Prioritize the list. Combine some tasks; eliminate others. Be sure to include your leisure activities as time for you. Continue the process to look at your progress.

9. First Things First; It's a Matter of Priorities

Always ask yourself four questions:

- Am I doing the most important things first?
- How urgent is this task?
- How can I get somebody else to do the task for me?
- What's the worst thing that can happen if I don't do this?

10. Schedule Personal Time

Get accustomed to scheduling all of your time. Give your own personal enjoyment a high priority. Plan ahead and schedule it.

11. Elephants Remember, People Don't

Let a detailed calendar be the basis of your "to do" list for your personal and professional lives. Only make commitments once you have reviewed it.

12. Why We Have Two Ears for One Mouth

Listen carefully. Before you respond, understand what the other person expects from you - and consider your own priorities before you commit to someone else.

13. In Sight is Top of Mind

Maintain your calendar in a regularly visible place. Update it throughout the day. Inform others of changes.

14. Clean Up After Yourself - Tie Loose Ends

Tie up loose ends by telling yourself and those involved that you have completed your end. Anything else needed will have to be handled as a new project, question, or favor.

15. Nobody's System Is As Good As Your Own

Evaluate each time-saving tip to see how it works for you. If you feel pressured or uncomfortable, adjust the approach until you can make it a comfortable habit.

16. Do Your Own Internal Audit

Once a week, sit down with your "to do" lists and review prior activities to see how you're doing. Make sure you recognize the good you're doing. Adjust your course as needed.



17. You Deserve A Break

Create mini-breaks in your routine that take your mind off the immediate priority and let you recharge your batteries. You may want to do a few low-priority things that are hanging around on your “to do” list that require your attention, but not much of your time.

18. Resist Temptation

Do the worst first. That is, do it today. Get it over with. What you don’t want to touch should be the first place you start.

19. Don’t Wait

Anticipate waiting time and use it to your advantage. Have paper, pen, book, blank cards, tape recorder, etc. with you when you think you may be waiting.

20. Just Do It - Inspiration Will Follow

Just do it. And do it now. If a thought enters your mind, act on it. Don’t take time to feel sorry for yourself, rationalize, or procrastinate. Just put one foot in front of the other and get it done. You can bite off one small piece at a time. Things take on a life of their own once they start.

21. When Someone Else Can Do It, Delegate It

Always ask yourself “What things that have to be done can only be done by me...not done best by me, but completed by me alone?” Delegate any items that don’t need your personal attention.

22. Say Yes To Simplicity

Recognize the importance of simplifying your life. Then make a list of your responsibilities, activities, and commitments, and decide which ones you can eliminate, share, modify, or reduce. Think about who you need to talk to to make it happen. Then, just do it.

23. Seek Support

Think about what you want to change. If you don’t know how to, seek support by talking with friends, relatives, religious advisors. Try spending some quiet time alone. An insightful book may be helpful.

24. Do More Than One Thing at a Time

- watch TV/pay bills
- talk on the phone/give yourself a facial
- cook and clean as you go
- take a shower/do the laundry
- drive a car/do tummy exercises
- exercise/listen to helpful audio tapes

25. Stop “Should-ing”

Stop worrying about what you “should” be doing by asking yourself: Did I plan to do it today? Is it a priority? Is it important? The more the answer is no, the more you will free yourself from the “should” monster.

26. Work Backwards, Plan Ahead

Look out a day, a few weeks, even a month or so in advance. Create a picture of what needs to get done, how it should be done, and what you can do today. Make it a habit to repeat this mental exercise regularly.

exerpts from “Finding Time: Breathing Space for Women Who Do Too Much” (Sourcebooks)

