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Finding Balance in Work/Life

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Imagine a wheel divided, like a pie diagram, into sectors representing key areas of your life.¹ Work. Finances. Health. Physical environment. Recreation and leisure. Family and friends. Significant Other. Personal growth. Spirituality. And so on; whatever is most important to you. Giving the centre a score of 0 and the outer edge a 10, rate your satisfaction with each life area. Then draw a heavy line to create the wheel's new edge. Would it give you a bumpy ride?

Ask yourself: which (if any) of these areas of potential imbalance deserve your attention? As you go through this exercise, here is some food for thought:

- Be careful with "wheel." It's only one among other metaphors for "balance." And metaphors, while useful, are also limiting. Balance is personal. Everyone has a unique image of what it looks like for them. What's yours?
- Balance isn't fixed, once and for all. It's dynamic (think of riding a bicycle), a process over time. And balance refers to the whole of your life. Each life area connects to the others. Rebalancing one area (say, striving to earn more money) may unbalance another (time for other things).

- We all have areas of imbalance at various points in our lives – the demands made by young children, for example – and these may seem unavoidable. "Out of balance" can be a condition of being driven by external circumstances and/or internal demands, but there usually is a choice.
- On the other hand, imbalance can be a good and sometimes necessary thing, a stimulus to personal growth and development. A totally balanced life could be quite boring, even deadly.
- Rebalancing (if that's your desire) involves connecting with core values, shifting perspectives, and some letting-go as new choices and commitments are made - all the while paying attention to work and home-life contexts as you move toward wholeness. And remember: balance is a skill that can be developed. Like any other skill, it requires practice and persistence.

¹ I first encountered this useful exercise in the Coach Training Institute's Professional Coaching Course. The "wheel of life" is elaborated in Laura Whitworth, Henry Kimsey-House and Phil Sandahl, *Co-Active Coaching: New Skills for Coaching People Toward Success in Work and Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black, 1998), 118-9, 135-6 and 202-3.