



SOPHIA ASSOCIATES

Awakening Leadership Within

Seek Harmony NOT Balance

There is a lot of hype about “balance” and leading a “balanced life”. I have come to believe that this is not attainable. I have come to believe that the current definition of “balance” is a set up for failure. Our lives are complicated and unpredictable. Especially for women, balance creates an “either/or” dynamic which translates for women: damned if you do/damned if you don’t. For example, I can work out and take care of myself or I can do the grocery shopping, or the report that is due; I can go to work and have a career, or I can become a stay-at-home-mom, etc. Because of women’s multiple roles, and the lack of support for these in our culture, the myth of balance imposes double bind situations and unrealistic expectations. And then we proceed to beat ourselves up over not being able to Do or Have it all. It doesn’t get much better for men either, who have their own set of cultural expectations that leaves little time or sometimes “permission” for self-care, following a passion or going to their kids games and activities.

Harmony is different, however. I think of Mother Nature and the harmony that is created, even out of chaos. Think about weather patterns in Nature or the ebb and flow of the tides. Nature’s harmony takes into account the “whole” system, not merely one or two aspects of a system. When we affect or influence one area of our lives, inevitably other areas are also affected. So if I get a new job, I may have to allow more time for commuting which means I may have to move my daycare from one town to another, which means I may need to allow more money to pay for that daycare, on and on. Balance is a duality. Harmony is integral and whole. We are either in or out of balance. Harmony seeks a synergy of multiple parts of the whole that allows flexibility, expansion and contraction, perhaps all at the same time in order to keep the entity, person or organization fluid, healthy and thriving.

If we look at entrepreneurs, what they do in one area of their business will inevitably affect the others. Example: the product I am selling (or service) is affected by the economy in that small companies cannot afford it any longer. So that may mean I have to reposition my marketing to attract a different client. That may mean I have to hire more salespeople or salespeople with different areas of expertise. Or I may have to adjust the product or service to sell to both markets, or...etc., etc.

Harmony allows for more choices and more areas to balance out; not just two areas. I think of balance like the scales a gemologist uses. He puts the gem on one plate and uses weights to counter the gem on the other plate. Eventually they “balance” where one side is equal to the other side (duality). But if you add or take something away, it moves out of balance. So it is a



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process of in/out of balance. You are limited by whether you are in balance (good) or out of balance (bad).

If we consistently think in terms of maintaining harmony, instead of balance, we can also put in place additional reserves of energy, time, money or resources for those times when we are met with the unexpected. We have more options open to us for being successful even if we are under some strain. Harmony allows for more flexibility and it increases our awareness of our environment. We are better able to make adjustments and decisions when we have more options. When the crisis or event is over, we can then adjust back as needed but we have not burdened ourselves with whether it was good or bad...it just was, and we adapted and our life worked despite the unexpected occurrence.

Step away from your life a bit and begin to think of the many aspects of your life and how they are inter-related. Build in additional resources to cushion the unexpected. Feel confident that you can adjust fluidly to challenges. Adapt without guilt or judgment. Harmony will enable you to feel that you have more choices available to you and that no one area of your life needs to take the brunt of the additional strain of life's unexpected challenges. Begin to think Harmony instead of Balance and see how that affects the choices you make.

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