<u>LifeBalance</u>

(A Proactive Approach to Balancing Work, Family, and Personal Needs)

INTRODUCTORY UNIT: OVERVIEW AND PREFACE TO LIFEBALANCE

(along with family supplements)

Lifebalance isn't something that comes easy. There is no magic wand. But better balance in life is attainable, and with it comes less stress and more joy. This on-line Lifebalance course will teach you, month by month, the perspectives and skills that will empower you to balance your time and your mental effort between the things that matter most, and to eliminate or "shortcut" the things that don't. The goal is to achieve more harmony between the needs of *family*, the demands of *work*, and the personal time we ought to be spending on *self*. This first month, in this introductory article, the goal is simply to tweak our perspective ... to see more accurately the time and place we live and to make our circumstances work for us rather than against us. At the end of this article is an outline of the topics and focus in months to come.

Do you like when and where you live?

As we lecture and speak to groups around the country, we often ask audiences two questions:

- 1. "Do you like where you live?"
- 2. "Do you like when you live?"

Certain kinds of answers are predictable...

Reasons why it's good to live in America: freedom, opportunity, beauty, convenience, affluence. Reasons why it's good to live where they are: people, neighborhoods, settings, community, amenities, home. Reasons why it's good to live now: technology, options, mobility and transportation, communication, science, medicine, entertainment and recreation variety.

Some negative responses are also predictable

Reasons why it's not good to live here: social problems – from abuse to addiction, from poverty to promiscuity, big taxes and big government, environmental pollution and media pollution, excessive nationalism and lack of awareness of the rest of the world, growing immorality and amorality. Reasons why it's not good to live now: there's too much of everything – too many options,



needs, expectations, competition. People are longing for simplicity, basics, quality.

After discussion, every time, the audience conclusion (and our conclusion) is that: For someone who is self-directed, self-determining, self-discerning, selfdirectioning, self-destinying, here and now are the best-ever place and time to live (choosing, and using the best of an amazing abundance of alternatives).

But for someone who is other-directed, who is controlled, compelled, coerced, or conned by media, materialism, marketing, and "mainstream morality" here and now are the worst-ever place and time to live. (Better to have been born 100 years ago in a basic community with built-in friends and standards, surrounded by less influence and fewer options.)

Now (with all due respect to Dickens) is the best of times and the words of times (and here is the best of places and the worst of places) depending on our powers of selectivity.

Do You Like How You Live?

Then we ask audiences a third question: "Do you like how you live?" While on question #1 and question #2 the positives come out first, on this third question it's the negatives: too hectic, too fast-paced, too much to do, too far behind. Stretched, stressed, strained, stirred-up, strung out, unsatisfied, unfulfilled, uninspired, unable to get ahead, get it together, get it done. Some good moments, but droplets in a sea of discontent – lives of quiet desperation.

Again, the more we talk, the more apparent it becomes the solution is selectivity, the cure is choosing. Not to get more done but to be more selective about what we do - not more quantity but more quality. We like how we live if we choose how we live and we live in a time and place where doing so is both more possible and more difficult than ever before.

Choosing how we live... practicing selectivity to allot our finite time, thought, and energy among our infinite options, alternatives, and wants is what we call Lifebalance. Lifebalance is figuring out how to give more of ourselves to what does matter and less of ourselves to what doesn't.

Lifebalance is "applied selectivity" – choosing how we act on our life options. And since our here and now is less predictable than any other, Lifebalance is also choosing how we will react to our non-options, to the things that happen to us – that act on us. Part of Lifebalance is learning to view surprises as opportunities, to let spontaneity be as important as structure, flexibility and diversion as welcome and as valued as firmness and discipline.





We have no choice over when we live; we have some choice over where we live; we have ultimate choice over how we live. Lifebalance is choosing how we live. Think about that: Lifebalance is choosing how we live!

We live in an interesting era. As we move into this new millennium, life is, as it has always been, a search. But lately what we are searching for has changed dramatically. During this century most Western men and women have not had to devote so much of themselves to the search for survival – for basic food, clothing, and shelter -- so they have sought harder for identity, recognition, "success," achievement, position, wealth, and material things. But now, more and more of us are shifting our search once again – looking for (and longing for) more peace, more harmony, more quality in our lives, more balance.

An Inner Search

It is an inner search more than an outer one. It has more to do with what's happening in our minds and hearts than in our bank accounts or our resumes, and the only way it can be measured is by the joy we feel in living. It is a search for a balance of priorities between the needs of our work, our families, and ourselves a balance of attitudes between the structure and discipline we all need with the spontaneity and flexibility we all want; and a balance of our goals between achievements and relationships, between things and people.

This is going to be a very personal series of articles. Every month we will present some stories or incidents from our own lives, our own family, our own discoveries and experiences, and our own frustrations and struggles in our personal search for Lifebalance. There will also be anecdotes from others we've learned from or watched in their own search for balance.

We believe there is a sequence in thinking through the principles and practices of Lifebalance. It should come in phases, and you should take a full month to think about the principles of one article—and to implement them before going on to the next one. That is why they appear one at a time—one for each month over the course of a full year. The sequence looks something like this: (Notice also that a big part of balance is making your present, your future, and your past fit seamlessly together!)

First Trimester:	"THE PRESENT"			
Month One:	Introductory Unit: Overview and Preface to			
	Lifebalance (and family supplements you will			
	use during this trimester).			
Month Two:	UNIT 1: Priority Balance (balancing work,			
	family, and personal needs).			
Month Three:	UNIT 2: "Attitude Balance" (balancing			
	structure with spontaneity).			

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Month Four:	UNIT 3: Monthly, Weekly, and Daily Balance.			
Second Trimester:	"THE FUTURE"			
Month Five:	UNIT 4: LIFEBALANCE (figuring out what you			
	want to do before you die)			
Month Six:	UNIT 5: SEASONBALANCE ("To every thing			
	there is a season." Balancing the four seasons			
	of your life).			
Month Seven:	UNIT 6: ERABALANCE (breaking seasons			
	down into three- to five-year chunks).			
Month Eight:	UNIT 7: YEARBALANCE (learning to go			
	beyond "New Year's Resolutions")			
Third Trimester:	"THE PAST"			
Month Nine:	UNIT 8: Why the past matters.			
Month Ten:	UNIT 9: "Lived" seasons, eras, and years.			
Month Eleven:	UNIT 10: Files for events, ideas, and people.			
Month Twelve:	Summary and "The New Beginning."			

The Kind of People We Are Today

We're all busy people, doing so much, but somehow leaving out the most important things.

People who are tired enough to know they've been working hard yet still not too sure that anything worthwhile is getting done.

People who get their jollies by crossing things off their "to do" list, but who have lost their spontaneity.

People who live to work rather than work to live.

People who are always remembering how it was or thinking about how it will be.

People who read every article they see on stress and depression.

People who want to simplify, get back to the basics, and slow down, but who never get around to doing so (or even figure out how it could be done).

People who say they're happy, but can't define happiness and wonder if they even understand the word.

People who are too busy "getting there" to enjoy the journey.





People who see their kids growing up too fast and their own lives going by too fast and feel they're missing the boat in both categories.

The Prevailing Challenge

In the Western world, before the Industrial Revolution, the prevailing personal challenge was survival.

Following the Industrial Revolution the personal challenge was physical and economic quality of life.

Today the personal challenge is balance.

Because to be successful we need to be strong and structured; and yet to be fun, we need to be flexible and free, it's hard to balance our attitudes.

Because there are so many possibilities and responsibilities, so many options, alternatives, choices, it's hard to balance our time and our priorities.

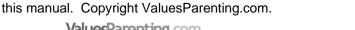
Because there are so many things we want and so many people who need us or whom we care for, it's hard to balance our goals.

We have the same amount of mental energy and the same number of hours in a day as people of other generations and other locations, but we have so many more demands on us.

We live in the first time and place in the world's history and geography where our challenges stem not from scarcity but from surplus, not from oppression but from options, and not from absence but from abundance.

Instead of struggling to find our next meal, we are struggling to get our busy families together long enough to eat a meal. Instead of searching for information, we are buried in it. Instead of striving for the connections of communication and being in touch, we long for the privacy of escaping or disconnecting the technology that makes us always accessible, always available. Instead of fighting for freedom to make our own choices, we are reeling in the 800 TV channels, 5,000 new Internet sites every abundance of our options day, tens of thousands of consumer items, and almost limitless numbers of education, job, and lifestyle alternatives.

It's not the sparse simplicity of too little but the crowded complexity of too much that plagues our lives. And the answers lie not in the balance of our abilities but in our ability to balance.





The "units" within this program will be more than instruction. They will also be the story of a journey – our personal Eyre journey toward what we think is a better way to live. We've chosen to put balance ahead of business and quality in front of quantity. It was a choice that took us a while to make and that involved some interesting trade-offs, such as fewer social gatherings and more kite flying, making fever "contacts" and more friends, acquiring fewer things and gaining more time, giving up some major clients in order to spend a summer together as a family building a log cabin.

We view ourselves – and invite you to view us – not as experts nor perfect examples of Lifebalance but as one case study in the struggle. We're not speaking as those who have arrived and now shout back at you to follow. Rather, we've started a journey in a new direction toward a calmer, more balanced place. We invite you to travel with us.

Starting with next month (UNIT I), you will find that Lifebalance is essentially an on-line workbook where you learn a whole new way of thinking. You will simply fill in questionnaires and develop your own personal ability to prioritize what matters and to portion out your attention and your mental energy according to what matters most.

Family Supplements

As you might suspect, since Lifebalance is one of the programs of valuesparenting.com, FAMILY is the prime balancing point. We sincerely believe that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" and that "the most important work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own home."

Thus, right in this first introductory unit, we are passing on to you some "family supplements" that you can start using now and that will help bring your family into the Lifebalance process over the next few months.

Audio Summary

As an added bonus to you who are participating in the Lifebalance program, Richard and Linda Eyre will do an audio overview or summary of each upcoming unit of the program. You can either listen to these overviews on-line or download them to a CD.

Supplements: Overview explanations and printable forms:

- 1. Sunday Dinner "Awards"
- 2. The "Five Facet Review"
- 3. Calendar and Responsibility Form





□ Sunday Dinner "Awards (principally for families with children under 14).

Almost all parents realize that "rewarding the positive" is preferable to "punishing the negative." Yet the fact remains that most of the attention we give to children comes in the form of correction, reprimand, and punishment.

One simple way of reversing this emphasis is "the Sunday awards."

The first (and not easy) step is to get the whole family together for Sunday dinner. During the meal, ask the following questions (allowing enough time for discussion in between).

- 1. Who was a "self-starter" this week (took the initiative, saw what needed doing and did it without being asked, etc.)?
- 2. Who made a special effort to be "neat as a pin" this past week (kept room clean, straightened up, put things in order, etc.)?
- 3. Who was a "leader for the right" this week (stood up for what he believed, resisted "following the crowd," tried to influence someone for good, etc.)?
- 4. Who was an "ice breaker" this past week (made a new friend, started an interesting conversation, asked a question, gave a thoughtful compliment to someone, etc.)?
- 5. Who remembered to ask himself, "What would Jesus do?" during the week, and, as a result, consciously made a good choice or decision?

Take some time on each question. Give everyone a chance to think back through the week to see if they can think of something that would put them "in the running" for the award.

Involve parents and children (and any dinner guests who may be there) in the discussion. Give the "awards" that follow to the persons who did best in each category. (The awards can be posted on the winners' bedroom doors until the following Sunday when they are "re-awarded" to the next winners.) You may want to have children color them and mount them on cardboard to make them more durable. You may also want to make notes on the back of each award concerning who won the award on each past Sunday.

The conversation, the recall of positive behavior, and the opportunity to give specific praise can make this a very beneficial part of Lifebalance for families.

■ The "Five Facet Review" form

One great key to parenting is the realization that you are the only real expert on your children. The failings of most parents are not due to any lack of knowledge of techniques or parenting materials. Rather, they are due to not thinking enough about the particular characteristics and needs of each individual child.

A little analytical thinking, especially if it can be done with your spouse, and especially if it is done on a regular basis, can help you to know your children better and can help you "catch" any potential problems before they become serious.

A "five facet review" is accomplished by going out to dinner together (or to any private place) and discussing each child – asking, "How is he doing physically? mentally? socially? spiritually? emotionally? As you ask yourself the questions, make brief notes in the appropriate box on the following form.

If you are a single parent, have this monthly outing with someone who knows and loves your children (a grandparent, friend, neighbor, etc.).

You will "spot" certain areas that need attention – an emerging problem – a potential opportunity – an area of concern. And these will become your goals or areas of focus for the month ahead. The things you decide to do can be entered in the "family goals" space on the monthbalance form which follows.

Calendar and Responsibility Form

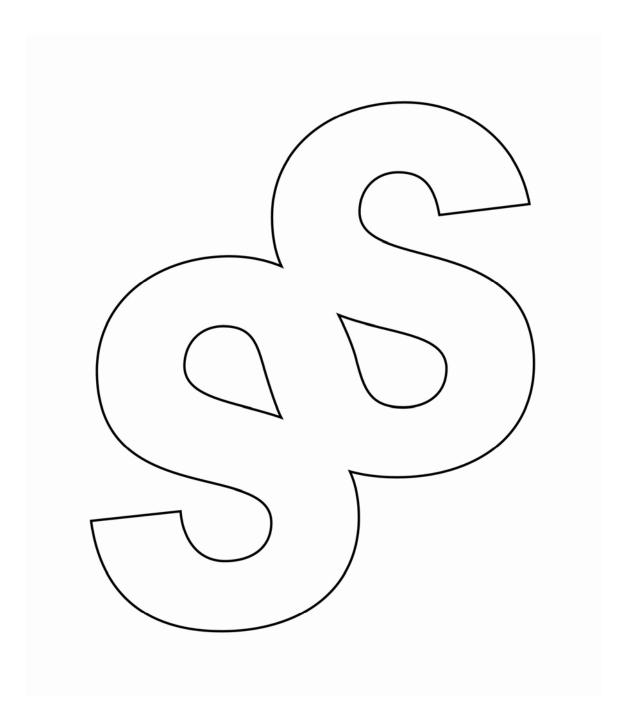
It is extremely beneficial for families to plan together. Families who sit down for a few moments and consider the coming month will find new levels of communication and will enjoy both the anticipating of future events and the coordinating and organization of schedules, goals, and objectives.

Most families find that family jobs and responsibilities work best when they are shifted or rotated each month, therefore the form that follows has spaces to realign the household jobs assigned to children.

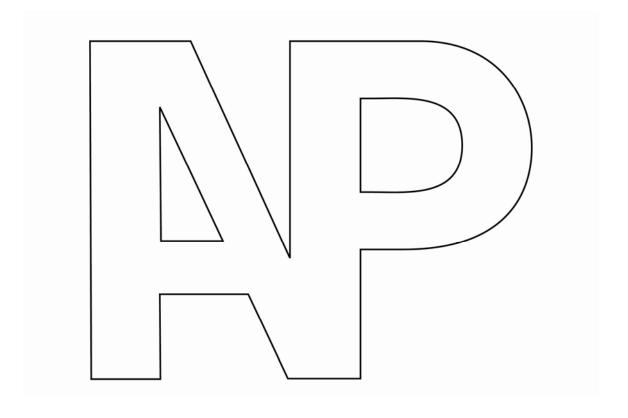
Also, families who have two or more children, and who have at least one child over eight years of age, find a "tutor-tutee" system highly effective and helpful both in extending responsibility to children and in taking some of the weight and pressure off parents. A "tutor" is an older child who is assigned to look out for the needs of a younger "tutee" during the month. The tutor does everything from cutting the tutee's meat at the table to helping him with his job and getting him in bed on time at night. (Tutors teach their tutees, they do not discipline them – that function is reserved for parents.) Tutor assignments should be changed or rotated each month.

Parents who are participating in other valuesparenting.com programs can use the bottom spaces to keep track of the particular "joy," "responsibility," or "value" they are working on for the month.

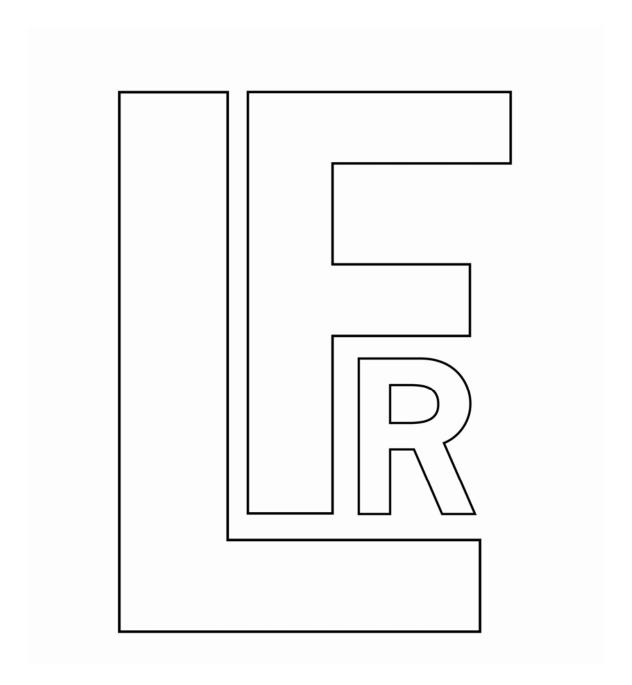
"Self Starter" Award



"Neat as a Pin" Award

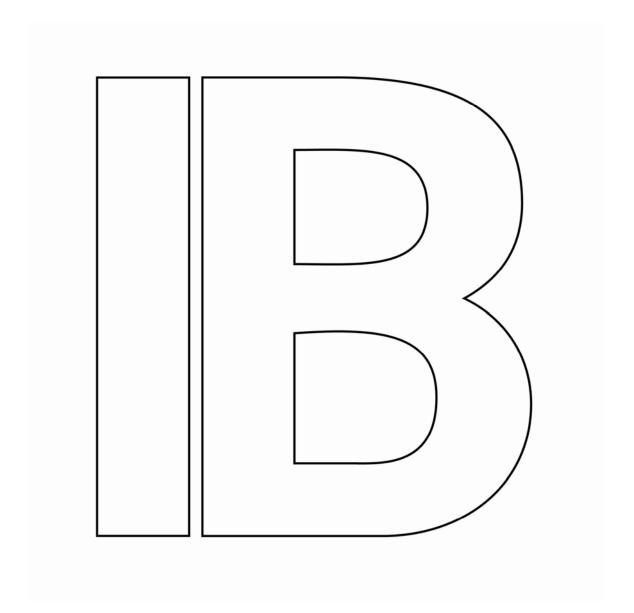


"Leader for the Right" Award

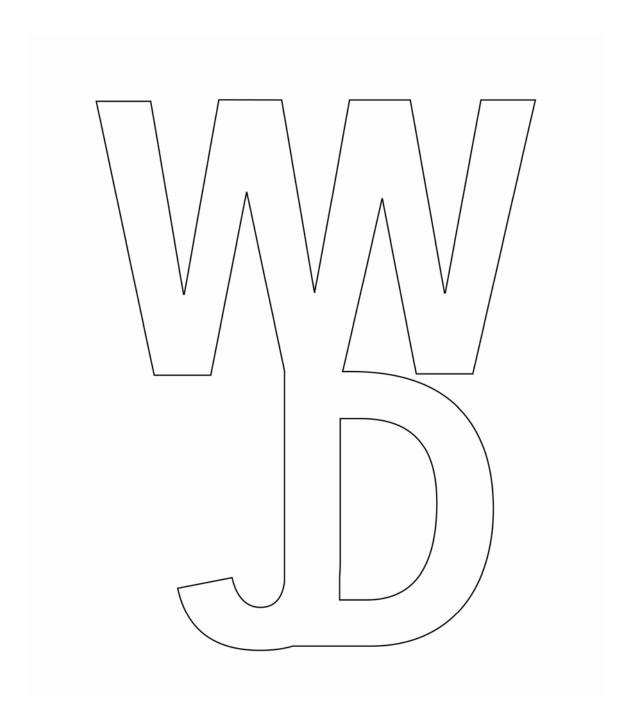


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"Ice Breaker" Award



"What Would Jesus Do" Award



Five Review Date:_

Child			
Physical			
Mental			
Social			
Emotional			
Spiritual			

Month of: ______ 20___

