



Balancing Life's Priorities

-Defining and implementing your most valuable characteristics

We've all got a list of tasks in which to complete by the end of the day, week or month, and it seems as if we're always pushing the envelope to meet these pre-established deadlines. There just doesn't seem to be enough hours in a day to get things done. Days seem to fly by like a blur and although we may have accomplished two or three items on our "to-do" list by the end of the day, we've inadvertently added five or six new ones, consequently our list just seems to get bigger and bigger with each passing day. Not only does our list cultivate, but the order of the tasks in which were to complete, based on the priority or urgency will constantly change as well. Our priorities are established in rank of what is most important or urgent to us at that time, however as each day comes and goes the order of our priorities can and will change.

Why do priorities change? Everyone has their own reasons, maybe we realize that what we really want is more time with our family. Maybe we conclude that in order to get that long sought promotion, more time at work is necessary. Maybe we decide to join a committee or group in order to improve our neighborhood or raise money for a charity. It is things like these that drive our priorities to be re-defined and redistributed throughout our list.




Balancing our priorities can seem daunting. Often times it is the priorities in which we really need to implement into our daily regimen that we find a reason for pushing them to the bottom of our list. Unfortunately it's most often our nutrition and exercise that are included in those descending priorities and we find any and every reasonable excuse why they cannot be included in our life on a consistent basis.

Mark Twain wrote, that if the first thing you had to do each morning was to eat a live frog, you would be able to go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that was probably the worst thing that was going to happen to you all day. He wasn't implying that you or anyone actually eat a live frog, he was referring to the task you struggle most in accomplishing. Your frog is that one thing you're most likely to procrastinate. It is also the one that can have the greatest positive impact on your life at this moment.

Since having kids, my wife is no longer able to exercise in the evenings. After having our first child just over 4 years ago I would urge her to get up early (before the baby) and go down stairs to do her cardiovascular exercise. She's never been a morning person and fought me on this recommendation, but eventually realized that if she was going to exercise she would have to do so early in the morning. Consequently, her greatest sacrifice -her frog- was getting up at 4:30 in the morning to exercise.

VOLUME 3
Issue 26
July, 2005

Success Meals
816-561-6678

Saturday	Sunday	Monday
		
<u>Partly Cloudy</u>	<u>Partly Cloudy</u>	<u>Chance of T-storms</u>
88° 71°	92° 72°	91° 71°



Prior to conceding to the idea that she was going to have to exercise in the early morning, my wife pulled out every excuse in the book, she would say that she just couldn't focus that early in the morning or that she would be tired all day if she were to get up an hour earlier than normal to exercise. The reality was that she just didn't want to get up any earlier than she already was and therefore was thinking of every excuse she could in order to justify –in her mind- why she couldn't workout early in the morning.

When she finally realized that the odds of her being able to exercise in the evenings were low and therefore she would likely miss a lot of workouts which would result in her “not” attaining the body, energy and well-being she wanted, but instead she would regress and therefore lose some of her cardiovascular strength, muscle tone and sense of well-being she quickly changed her priorities and therefore she decided that she was in fact a morning person. Now, if you were to ask her what time of day she prefers to work out she's quick to state “the morning time”, because she's discovered that everything she used to think about early morning exercise was wrong. Today she feels more energetic “after” her workouts and she's come to rely on this exercise-induced energy to launch her into her busy days. By the time she's off the treadmill she's running on all cylinders, revved up and excited about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. She's also found that her ability to focus on daily tasks is heightened, making her more productive throughout the day. Also, exercising first thing in the morning provides a number of additional advantages such as, accelerated fat burning, boosted

metabolism, reduced cravings, and working out first thing in the morning gives a person something positive that he or she can count on no matter what happens the rest of the day.

I believe we all lie in bed at the end of a long day and access the day's accomplishments, setting a value on our ability to complete worthy tasks. If all else were to fall apart once you got to work or started your day at least you would be able to say to yourself, “at least I worked out”.

In today's fast paced life it's no secret that finding time to exercise and eat right is a struggle for most people, I've heard all the excuses and no matter how valid or sincere they seem, they're still just excuses. You can and you must find a way to make healthy eating and exercise a part of your life, I don't care if it means making all your meals on Sunday or getting up early 3 days a week to do 20-minutes of cardio. Making exercise and eating right a part of your routine should be important (a priority) to you. Regular exercise will keep you younger, both physically and mentally, whereas living a sedentary lifestyle increases your health risks in so many ways. Living an unhealthy lifestyle only compounds itself. At first it's a little extra weight accompanied with a sluggish and lethargic sentiment. Overtime these ill effects will turn into life threatening disorders such as coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stiff joints, breathlessness, osteoporosis and a frail, vulnerable body.

When I see people aimlessly abusing their body's without any consideration of the consequences I'm reminded of an Emily Dickenson quote, which reads,

*“Because I could not stop for death,
he kindly stopped for me”.*

The busier and more stressful life you lead, the more you need to make time to eat right and exercise. So stop making excuses and start

using your common sense. Stop working yourself to the bone trying to improve your material life and set aside some time to improve your physical well being. When you take care of one, your ability to accomplish the other will compound.

Now that I've scolded those who don't place a daily emphasis on exercise and nutrition I want to address those of you whose pendulum swings to the opposite direction. That's right, this article is not just about the importance of including exercise and nutrition into your life, this article is about “balance”, and so now let's address those of you who never miss a workout or stray from their diet. You're the one who's at the health club every day constantly focusing on your vision. The vision of you, but not you today, rather you as you aspire to be. You're lean, toned, athletic and strong. This image drives you. You know what you want to accomplish and you're determined to get it...No matter what it takes. When three to four hours has elapsed since your last meal your heating and eating your subsequent meal. Timex could set their watch to your eating schedule. Everything that you do you do with reason and faith that all of your hard work will pay off, to you, your health and vitality is not a one-hour exercise session three to five days a week. It is much more than that, it's what you do 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, it's your way of life and it defines who you are. No doubt, it is easy for this health and fitness lifestyle to take over and consume your every day life and dictate almost every action, thought or emotion that you make or have. I've seen this type of lifestyle consume people and control their ability to be happy or sad. Their ability to exercise and eat right could even

dictate whether or not they were optimistic or pessimistic or self-confident or insecure. Their ability to exercise and eat right dictates their state of emotions.

I used to be one of these "Fitness fanatics". I would, eat, sleep and drink health and fitness. It was the center of my life and nothing came before. You may be thinking " what's wrong with that? Isn't that the only way to achieve real success? That depends on what your definition of success is?

If you are the average fitness enthusiast, you probably have some ideal body weight in mind and possibly some percent body fat in which you wish to obtain. That, to you, would be ultimate success. There are ways to be dedicated and consistent, but it does not have to be at the expense of other aspects of your life. You have to remember what's REALLY important in life. What will create real meaning, real purpose, real fulfillment, and ultimately real true, complete and perpetual happiness? For me, my happiness was dictated on whether or not I worked out that day, how hard I exercised, and whether or not was I able to consume the perfect ratio of protein and carbohydrates at three to four hour intervals. Can you imagine the psychological trauma I put myself through mentally when I missed a meal because of some unavoidable chain of events or those times I fell ill and consequently was unable to exercise or even eat? And then there was the annual vacation. Talk about a real emotional spin cycle. Instead of excitement I was over-ran with anxiety, I mean where was I going to workout? How on earth was I going to get in all my meals, especially if the years trip was in Mexico? I recall a 4-day trip to Las Vegas some friends of

mine talked me into taking with them. I reluctantly agreed to go, but so much wanted to experience the fun and memories all my friends talked about every time they returned from one of these outings. So I agreed, but made sure that I was prepared, I called the hotel and located the nearest health club. And the night before we were to leave I prepared 4 days worth of chicken, rice and broccoli. That morning I packed an Igloo cooler with ice and all the food I'd need. We arrived in Las Vegas and everything was working as planned. I'd get up early in the morning, catch a cab to the gym to get in a workout and would be back at the hotel before anyone had even gotten up. Throughout the day I'd closely watch the time and make my way back to the hotel room for my required meal regardless of where we were or how much it inconvenienced the others. But the real payoff for my consistency and dedication came on our last day there. Now don't get me wrong, I don't think that there's anything wrong with working out or preparing meals to take with you when you go out of town, what I'd done up to this point may be considered excessive to some, but it was not obsessive. It's, what came next where I crossed the line. We had an early morning flight and we were all hustling around getting ready. After packing all my clothes I sat down on the edge of the bed to eat my last meal before heading to the airport. As I opened my cooler I quickly realized that something was not right, warm moisture and a rancid odor emitted from the cooler. I looked down at my Tupperware container, which was floating on top of warm water and realized that I had forgotten to restock my cooler with ice the night before. What came next was neurotic, but I was a health junkie and inside of that container was my drug of choice. I remember staring down at the container contemplating the odds of how long it had been in this incubator. Perhaps the ice

melted only moments ago and therefore the chicken was still good. I knew that we would not have time to find anything healthy to eat before heading towards the airport. I also knew that we had a layover in Phoenix and therefore would not be back in K.C. for a good 6-hours after departing. I couldn't deprive my body for 6 hours, I'd be emaciated by the time we got to KC. So, I thought to myself, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" and when in Vegas... So I gambled. I reached inside the cooler, pulled out the container, peeled back the lid and ate my requisite amount of chicken. As I'm writing this I can vividly recall the strong stench that filled the room when I opened the container and ate the chicken.

We were a good hour outside of Kansas City when it hit me. My temperature rose, I began profusely sweating, yet at the same time I was shivering. I become nauseated and had a piercing pain shooting through my midsection. I spent the remainder of the flight in the restroom.

My happiness required that I not take 4-days off of my strict eating and exercise regimen. As a result, I spent 2-weeks bed ridden and on a strict diet of Saltines and 7-Up.

Exercise and eating right is an important facet of ones life that can produce great things. However, it is only one facet in one's life. Being physically fit is highly important, it's how I've chosen to live my life and I've chosen to encourage others to live a physically fit life as well. But, being in great health alone, is not enough. There is so much more to this life and so much

more to you. You're not one dimensional, and therefore you cannot be defined by one thing. Think about all that you can contribute to society, your qualities and characteristics. Now ask yourself if you're utilizing all of these attributes in your daily life. If you're not, you're selling yourself short. Take inventory of yourself and realize those meaningful attributes that you possess yet do not implement. Then make a plan to complete who you are and meet your full potential.

I recall my "breakthrough". It was just over 10-years ago. Due to unexpected and unavoidable adversity I was physically unable to exercise for almost a years time. Initially I fell into a deep depression, and as a result I allowed my eating habits to fall as well. I thought to myself, what's the point, if I can't workout why eat right? For me it was all or nothing.

I also recall how differently some people treated me when I no longer wore my gorilla suit. I remember returning to the gym a year later after being cleared to once again workout. People who once looked up to me now ostracized me. No longer did anyone want my nutrition or workout advice either, I guess the consensus was that if you lose muscle you lose your knowledge about the related industry as well. This truly bothered me, I knew that I wasn't as muscular as I had been, but wasn't there more to me than the circumference of my arms or how much I could bench press? And, I suddenly realized that the answer was

no. I had other talents and attributes but I wasn't practicing them in my daily life. I had put all I had into the fitness lifestyle. I had put all my eggs into one basket and as a result, I had no balance in my life.

I knew that I had to find a balance so I took the same principles in which I learned from adhering to a well-designed exercise and eating routine and applied them to virtually every other aspect of my life. Today nutrition and exercise are still a huge aspect of my life, they're just no longer the only aspect in my life. A good-looking physique is great but it will only bring you sporadic happiness. A physique sculpted towards perfection is good, but a person sculpted towards perfection is so much better.

Using a structured well executed plan you can move every meaningful aspect of your life towards perfection in the same way that you move your body and your health closer and closer to perfection through your eating regimen. As a former body builder, when I had a weak body part I would prioritize that part and place an emphasis on it at the top of each and every workout. The same rule applies when we lack in some other area of life. We simply need to prioritize it and place daily emphasis towards its improvement. Possible even implementing it "first thing", in order to assure that it gets done.

Too often we do just the opposite, than what we know we should do. You may know that you need to spend more time with your kids, yet continue to work late. It's like that guy at the health club with the great chest and arms but "tooth pick" legs. Every time

you go the gym there he is doing curls or bench presses. He's found something that works for him, and instead of trying something new and focusing on something he's not so good at and clearly needs to improve upon, he continues to do what he's comfortable doing. An unbalanced body is the result of his complacency.

Think of how much more fulfilling life would be if we all took the principles of self-improvement and goal setting that regular exercise and even your Success Meals program have taught you and applied these principles to everything missing in our lives. Whether it's getting up an hour early a few days a week to walk on the treadmill or getting home from work earlier a few days a week so you can spend some quality time with your family. I promise you that you'll be happier, more fulfilled and more complete as a result. This synergism will spill over into other areas of your life therefore improving your performance, abilities, attitude and persona.

Find a way to incorporate those worthy characteristics in which you know your lacking into your daily life. Make them a priority.

There's a great satisfaction to be gained through the process of implementing new, admirable traits into your life. You'll come to realize that as you steadily work towards creating balance in your life it's not so much about the outcome as it is about who you become along the way.