



“It’s the power struggle between husband and wife, mother and child, employer and employee that can tip the scales of harmony, inevitably affecting all aspects of our wellbeing.”

LIFE BALANCE:

HOW TO MAINTAIN BALANCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

The dynamics in a relationship, whether intimate, within the family, in the workplace, or in everyday interactions, can make the difference between having a good day or a bad day.

According to Relationships Australia, ‘people in supportive, loving relationships are more likely to feel healthier, happier and satisfied with their lives’. They suggest that ‘they are also less likely to have mental or physical health problems or to do things that are bad for their health’.

SO WHAT IS A BALANCED RELATIONSHIP?

Psychotherapist and clinical counsellor Susannah Paterson (www.susannahpaterson.com) talks about the power balance in a relationship, or simply put, ‘the give and take’. She says, ‘the give and take is vital to a healthy relationship, and it’s normal for the ebb and flow of the power balance to shift to and fro within the relationship.’ And no matter what kind of relationship it is, she stresses that a ‘healthy balanced relationship is created through mutual kindness and respect for each other’.

This is not to say that if you establish and maintain these things then it’s all smooth sailing ahead. Any form of interaction with another human being is bound to have the occasional challenge in one form or another, because we all have different values, beliefs or expectations, and it’s these very things that can potentially cause conflict in a relationship.

COMMON SIGNS OF AN IMBALANCED RELATIONSHIP

- ✦ Do you ever feel resentful because it seems like you are doing all the giving?
- ✦ Do you feel pressured by the other person to make all the decisions?
- ✦ Do you have a sense of being taken for granted or disrespected?
- ✦ Do you suffer from physical, emotional or sexual abuse?

‘These are telltale signs of an imbalanced relationship,’ says Susannah.

CONSEQUENCES OF IMBALANCE

Susannah says the implications of an imbalanced relationship typically range from ‘mildly annoying or slightly hurtful, to serious emotional or physical damage’. She adds that ‘problems usually manifest

through an inability to resolve conflict, which then festers with resentment, competitiveness, and manipulative strategies. Relationships of all kinds are going to be challenging at some point, conflict when it’s worked through is both normal and desirable. Each time you successfully resolve something, you build a stronger more resilient relationship’.

THE SOLUTION FOR AN IMBALANCED RELATIONSHIP

Relationships Australia advises keeping the communication channels open and discussions of all issues as the key to establishing or regaining balance in your relationships.

The bottom line is, the solution lies in trying to stay on a two-way street. Sure, difficulties at work can cause strain on our personal and family relationships, just as problems at home can affect our performance at work; but if you can find equilibrium in one, then you are halfway there. It’s all about balance.

SUSANNAH’S TIPS TO CREATING BALANCED RELATIONSHIPS

When having a relationship dilemma and you don’t know what to do reflect on the question, ‘What will be both kind and respectful to myself and to the other person?’

- ✦ **Show kindness and respect** as they are the indisputable foundations.
- ✦ **Let go of resentments.** If you have been hurt, or annoyed by something the other person has done or said, let them know and then let it go. Always focus on the thing that’s upset you rather than the person. It’s better to say ‘when you were 30 minutes late I felt annoyed,’ rather than ‘you’re always late’.
- ✦ **Avoid ‘competitive’ conversations.** These are destructive as they are dismissive of the other person.
- ✦ **Learn the difference** between non-assertion (I lose, you win), assertion (we both win) and aggression (I win/you lose).
- ✦ **Cultivate integrity** and regularly ask yourself ‘what is my intention here – to hurt or to heal?’



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