

PARENTS: IS YOUR LIFE IN BALANCE?

Evaluate what you rely on to help yourself feel a purpose in life. Look back over recent weeks. What have you relied on to help you feel good about yourself? When your child comes home from school with an *F* on a test, do you feel that you have received an *F* in parenting? When your child wins an award, do you feel like you've won, too?

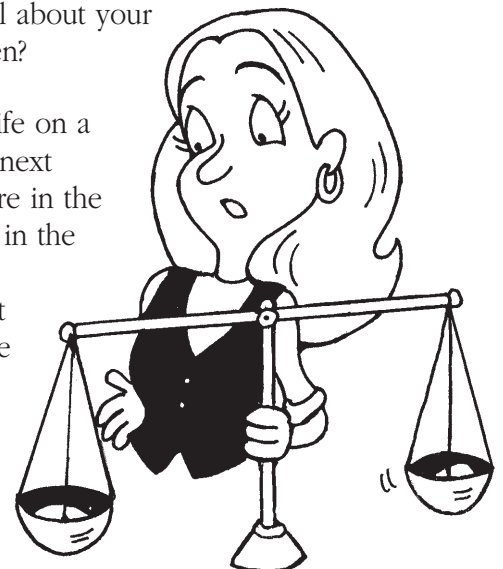
Many parents rely totally on their children for self-esteem. Others rely on their careers for their satisfaction. It's dangerous and unhealthy to rely on only one or two areas of life for a sense of personal worth. To parent well, we must constantly strive for balance in life.

As a Christian, I know that I am worthwhile, no matter what. My self-worth does not depend on what I do, or how many people I counsel with in a day, or what my young adults are doing with their lives. Since God has created me in his image, I am worthwhile no matter what I do. In other words, God loves me unconditionally. I don't have to earn His love. Acceptance of God's unconditional love forms a basis for a healthy balance in life.

IS YOUR LIFE IN BALANCE? CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACETS OF YOUR LIFE:

- ◆ **SPIRITUAL:** Do you regularly attend church? Are you working on building a personal relationship with God?
- ◆ **PHYSICAL:** Do you exercise? Are you watching what you eat and drink? Do you take time to relax?
- ◆ **PROFESSIONAL:** (This may relate to your work inside the home or outside the home.) How do you feel about this component of your life?
- ◆ **MARITAL:** How do you feel about your marriage relationship? If you are not married, evaluate your relationships with others.
- ◆ **SOCIAL:** Do you go out with others? With whom do you socialize? Are they positive influences in your life or do they tend to drag you down or depress you?
- ◆ **PERSONAL GROWTH:** Have you sought out any resources recently to help you with relationships or your own self-esteem?
- ◆ **FINANCIAL:** How would you rate your financial situation? Are you spending more money than you make?
- ◆ **PARENTAL:** How do you feel about your relationship with your children?

Now rate each area of your life on a scale from 1 to 10. See chart next page. (1, 2 or 3 means you are in the pits; 4, 5 or 6 means you are in the average range; 7, 8, 9 or 10 means you are soaring in that area.) This is a very subjective test, but it can shed a great deal of light on your life.



(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

SPIRITUAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PHYSICAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PROFESSIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MARITAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SOCIAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PERSONAL GROWTH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FINANCIAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PARENTAL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

When one's life is out of balance, one will tend to be much more affected by disappointments in a particular area. If you are attempting to get all of your sense of worth or relief from stress from one or two areas, your well-being will be seriously threatened. You may overreact and become too angry if those one or two areas are not going well.

One woman I counseled with felt really good only if her husband was happy, and his happiness was dependent on whether or not he was making lots of sales in real estate. He was too dependent on a shaky real estate mar-

ket, and she was too dependent on him and his mood.

Another man I counseled with rated himself in the pits in all areas listed. His idea of improving his life was to double his salary in two months. He knew this wouldn't happen, but he was focusing on that one area to the detriment of the rest. I said to him, "If you walk to church with your family on Sunday, you will be helping to balance the spiritual, physical, social, marital, and parental aspects of your life, and that is something you *can* do." He never returned to counseling. He was

stuck, focusing on only one area of his life, the financial area, hoping that if it changed, all would be well. John Wooden, the famous UCLA coach, once said, "Don't let what you *can't* do keep you from doing what you *can* do."

One added benefit to achieving balance in your life is that you'll be modeling powerful life skills for your children. With time and patience, you'll be helping to equip your kids with a very important tool for a healthy adult life. With balance in their lives, kids will handle disappointments much better and have a healthier self-esteem.

A CHALLENGE TO YOU:

1. Pick out the three areas you rated lowest, and write out specific goals to improve those areas.
2. Rate the same areas of your spouse's life, and have him or her rate your life. Complete this exercise by discussing the evaluations.

