



Balanced Living

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Spring Cleaning...

*our homes
and ourselves.*

Every year many people take the time to thoroughly clean their home, which is often done in the Spring. During the year they attend to the surface dust but overlook areas that are hidden from sight.

How often during the year do you overlook areas of your life that need a thorough cleaning? Many parts of you have been affected by the accumulation of events through out the year. You may not even notice them until you begin to explore and examine how they are affecting the way you feel about yourself and the way you interact with others.

Your emotional health is often influenced by your physical health, mental habits (such as worry), distorted thoughts, and the quality of your social relationships. If you "dust around" issues that are affecting you emotionally, the dirt continues to build and you may feel overwhelmed with the task ahead.

Just as cleaning your home may take some planning and effort, cleaning the clutter from your life also requires intentional and deliberate action. Decide to spend some time identifying and writing down what you would like to have "cleaned" in your life. List as many possible ways of accomplishing each area and chose one that is realistic. After trying it, possibly several times, reevaluate the outcome and try another method if necessary. This process can have a huge impact on your self esteem and how you present your "home" to others.



Newsletter Content

- Spring Cleaning.
- Cleaning Tips for Emotional Health.
- The Art of Self-Nurture.
- Saying "no" without feeling guilty.
- Meeting your basic needs.

Cleaning Tips For Emotional Health

Limit unhealthy mental habits:

How to Stop Worrying

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_self_help.htm

Manage your stress:

Stress Management

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

Focus on relationships:

Relationship Help

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/improve_relationships.htm

Improve your physical health:

Wellness

http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/mind_over_body_fat.asp

Get rid of emotional garbage:

Take Out the Trash

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Traveling-Light&id=649034>

Improve your attitude:

Attitude and Success

http://www.myselfmotivation.com/positive_attitude.html

Prevent burnout:

Coping Strategies

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm



Self-renewal is essential for your well-being. In life, being super busy is as ineffective as being idle. Balance is ideal and it blocks the road to burnout. If one is to achieve balance in life, there is no alternative but to self-nurture.

Self-nurture means to care for yourself and put yourself amongst your own list of priorities. Balancing work and family is hard. When you juggle them, you leave yourself last, which takes a toll on your mental and physical health.

It is important to be able to do what you can to feel good on a daily basis. You are then not dependent on others because you can nurture yourself. When you are self-caring you are not being selfish. In fact when you feel fulfilled, you then have more to give to others.

How much time do you give yourself each day for self-nurturing? If you are like most people you are probably getting a few minutes each week. If you spend most of your waking time working and taking care of others, it is a must to take time each day to take care of yourself.

Making time to self-nurture is a way to meet your basic needs. It helps you recognize what you need in order to feel in control, productive, motivated and happy.

Taking action steps toward self-care is an integral part of finding balance in your life. Which of the following areas do you do well in and which areas could be improved?

- Do you feel you get enough fun exercise?
- Do you eat something fresh and unprocessed everyday?
- Do you allow time in your week to touch nature, no matter how briefly?
- Do you do things that give you a sense of fulfillment, joy, and purpose?
- Are you getting daily or weekly spiritual nourishment?
- Do you forgive yourself when you make a mistake?
- Do you make time for friendship? Do you nurture your friendships?
- Do you make time for solitude?
- Can you honestly ask for help when you need it?
- Are you hugged and touched amply?

When your needs are met fairly consistently, you have energy, you feel secure and in control, and you have room to grow. However, knowing what you need is just the starting point... you then have the responsibility of going after those needs.



No

Saying “no” without feeling guilty

Thinking you are a bad person for saying “no” is a symptom of “the disease to please.” “Saying “yes” when you need to say “no” causes burnout. You do yourself and the person making the request a disservice by saying “yes” all of the time.”

Saying “NO” can be very difficult. People with low self-esteem very often have a lack of assertiveness and think they have to meet the expectations of everyone. It is very hard for them to set limits with others. They sometimes feel ashamed or guilty if they would say “NO”. But to do things against your will and possibilities will end up in feeling used and resentful.

It's a simple fact that you can never be productive if you take on too many commitments — you simply spread yourself too thin and will not be able to get anything done, at least not well or on time.

But requests for your time are coming in all the time — through phone, email, IM or in person. **To stay productive, and minimize stress, you have to learn the gentle art of saying “No”** — an art that many people have problems with.

What's so hard about saying “no”? Well, to start with, it can hurt, anger or disappoint the person you're saying “no” to, and that's not usually a fun task. Second, if you hope to work with that person in the future, you'll want to continue to have a good relationship with that person, and saying “no” in the wrong way can jeopardize that.

But it doesn't have to be difficult or hard on your relationship. **Here are 5 tips for learning the art of saying “No”:**

1. **Value your time.** Know your commitments, and how valuable your precious time is. Then, when someone asks you to dedicate some of your time to a new commitment, you'll know that you simply cannot do it. And tell them that: “I just can't right now ... my plate is overloaded as it is.”
2. **Know your priorities.** Even if you do have some extra time (which for many of us is rare), is this new commitment really the way you want to spend that time
3. **Practice saying “no”.** Practice makes perfect. Saying “no” as often as you can is a great way to get better at it and more comfortable with saying the word. And sometimes, repeating the word is the only way to get a message through to extremely persistent people. When they keep insisting, just keep saying no. Eventually, they'll get the message.
4. **Don't apologize.** A common way to start out is “I'm sorry but ...” as people think that it sounds more polite. While politeness is important, apologizing just makes it sound weaker. You need to be firm, and unapologetic about guarding your time.
5. **Stop being nice.** Again, it's important to be polite, but being nice by saying “yes” all the time only hurts you. When you make it easy for people to grab your time (or money), they will continue to do it. Show them that your time is well guarded by being firm and turning down as many requests (that are not on your top priority list) as possible.

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Take the time to learn the art of self-nurture, set boundaries, "clean your house" and develop balance in your life. With busy lifestyles, time constraints, demanding responsibilities and daily stressors we often neglect some of the following basic needs.

- 1. The need to give and receive attention.**
Without regular quality contact with other people, mental condition, emotional state and behavior can suffer quite drastically.
- 2. Taking heed of the mind body connection.**
Without correct and regular nutrition, sleep and exercise, your psychological state can suffer considerably.
- 3. The need for purpose, goals and meaning.**
If a person is deprived of the outward focus and satisfaction created by achieving goals, mental illness is often close behind.
- 4. A sense of community and making a contribution.**
This gives people a reason for being, over and above their own personal needs, that has been shown to benefit the immune system, mental health and happiness.
- 5. The need for challenge and creativity.**
Learning something new, expanding horizons, improving on existing skills all provide a sensation of progress and achievement. Without this, a person can feel worthless, or that there is no real reason for their being.
- 6. The need for intimacy.**
People have a need to share their ideas, hopes and dreams with others close to them.
- 7. The need to feel a sense of control.**
Those who are able to maintain a sense of control somewhere in their life fare the best. This is why having a variety of interests and activities are so important.
- 8. The need for a sense of status.**
It is important to feel important and recognized, even for small things.
- 9. The need for a sense safety and security.**
We need to feel our environment is basically secure and reasonably predictable. Financial security, physical safety and health, and the fulfillment of other basic needs all contribute to the satisfaction of this need.

Mike is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Northwest Metro Atlanta, Georgia. He has been in the mental health profession for 20 years and provides psychotherapy for adult individuals and couples.

Please feel free to contact him with comments on topics in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles.