

The balancing act

 By [Jane Stevenson](#)

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Celebrating Women's Day gives us a chance to reflect on how the role of women has changed through the years. We have many roles: mother, accountant, confidant, wife, tooth fairy, business woman, taxi, nurse, bottle washer and chief cook - I can go on. But you get where I am going with this.

Your career is important to you, but the problem arises when you start to neglect other important areas of your life. Areas which, if not balanced, can negatively influence your ability to be successful and happy.

To truly achieve success, we need to strive to live a balanced life.



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But what does that actually mean? Personally, I believe that true balance is not when all things are equal, that's idyllic. It's more about keeping mindful of the wheel of life and always keeping the bigger picture in mind. Investing wisely in your health, career, wealth creation, family, friends, relationships spirituality, personal time and fun. Here's some pointers, but remember everyone's life is different, priorities shift and change constantly:

Focus on life, not work

Change your perspective by thinking first about the life you want to live and then about the job and career which fits into that life and can support it financially. If you're strategic about your decisions, you can put the horse (your life) before the cart (your job and career).

Turn the tap on burnout

Burnout is described as "a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands". When you reach burnout you'll often find yourself with low energy levels, low self-esteem, and you will tend to work reactively rather than proactively.

In addition, stress (*related to overstretching yourself*) adversely affects your sleep, muddies your thinking, and diminishes your creativity. Regardless of how much you love what you do, you are not immune to burnout.

So, while technology can simplify our lives, it also makes it almost impossible to escape the ringing and buzzing of your cell phone or barrage of emails. Manage technology's grip and set aside time to relax, unwind and enjoy family and friends. You may think you do this already, but is this time without interruption? Today, because of technology we must be proactive and disciplined about returning natural balance to our lives.

This is best done through effective focus and self-management, the following works for me:

- Setting daily goals/schedules and sticking to them
- Saying "no" when you are at capacity
- Delegating some areas to others who are equally able
- Finding ways to work smarter, not harder
- Taking time to breathe in between it all

I am a huge believer in time for reflection, and when you spend time to reflect on your life, process, or challenges you might be facing, you can discover new and creative ways of accomplishing your daily tasks. I challenge you to find innovative tools and technologies to allow you more time to switch off, and do what you enjoy. For me, it's quiet time in nature, surrounded by peace and tranquility. For a friend of mine, it's the bustling chatter of friends meeting up.

Find a role model/mentor

Find people in your life or industry with a similar outlook to you, who successfully live healthy, happy and balanced lives. Watch them. Follow them online. Speak to them to find out what they are doing right.

Everyone is different. Remember to choose the life balance right for you. Don't adopt someone else's definition unless it fits you. When it comes to life balance, one size does not fit all.

Celebrate you

In 2003, Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* said, "[...] after graduation, there isn't one occasion when people celebrate you, besides birthdays, which we all enjoy."

And it's true. So celebrate you, do something you enjoy and focus on you: self-improvement, classes, sport, charity work or simply reading a book, listening to music, going to the movies, a concert or theatre performance. Turn off your phone, laptop anything which diverts your focus from you, and relax, recharge and have fun.

Celebrating you also means looking after yourself: eat right, sleep seven to nine hours a night and commit yourself to a weekly exercise program.

Fulfilling your purpose is your destiny. Finding your balance in life is essential to unleashing your potential. Be OK with everything not being equal but be mindful that you need to take care of all the aspects of your life – just not all at once.

Take your first, small step today. Tomorrow, take the next.

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ABOUT JANE STEVENSON

Named by CEO publication as SA's most influential government businesswoman in the SME sector in 2012, she's big on vision, strategy and effective communication. Start with a successful business strategy and executive coaching consultancy to leading national brands... add the experience of being a Board and EXCO member of the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber; and stir in some fearless Scottish roots and a dedication to building organisational vision. The result? A motivating, passionate team player.

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