



The Balanced Life

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A balanced life is a gift from God. Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not something you *do*, it is a Divine trait implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, just like joy, peace, love, gentleness, and meekness. In my flesh I cannot be temperate, loving, or gentle. But God, working through me, can. The following are some basic tips for achieving a balanced life.¹

Awareness: Be aware of stress traps that you set for yourself. Managing stress involves making choices, forming priorities, adopting attitudes, and taking actions that enable you to maximize your potential without overloading your abilities.

Pare down: People who are chronically stressed often feel that their lives are out of control. Balancing your life puts you back in control and helps you avoid unnecessary stress. Here are some tips: **Limit** the number of decisions you make in a day. **Monitor** your schedule, including the amount and intensity of your activities. **Avoid** clutter. **Regulate** the rate of change taking place in your life at one time, including jobs, moving, travel, and even holidays. Set a realistic schedule. **Eliminate** personal debt, especially credit card debt, and don't buy on impulse. **Identify** your most important goals and prioritize your time accordingly. **Take** time to help others—it's a good way to put your own life in perspective.

Lifestyle: Take time to **eat nutritious food** at regular mealtimes. It lowers stress, boosts immunities, and punctuates your busy day with pleasure and satisfaction. It reduces cravings for unhealthy snacks between meals. Drink plenty of **water** between meals to keep the blood free-flowing and to help nutrient transport. **Exercise regularly.** It will not only improve physical health but also lower stress and improve your mood. **Don't neglect sleep.** Determine how much sleep you need and make sure you get it. Going to bed early is the best way to get deep, refreshing sleep. **Relax.** Find a relaxing, stress-reducing hobby or pastime that refreshes and distracts you from your daily routine. **Connect.** Spiritual needs must be met as well as physical needs. Take time with God in His Word, and connect with others of like faith—and don't forget to ask Him for balance in your life!

¹ Adapted from *Stress: Beyond Coping*. Skip MacCarty, Berrien Springs, MI. 2002.