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seen one of these fascinating, scientific versions of a top. Still in production today, they have changed little from the original model produced in 1917. Pull the string and the finely tuned wheel whirls softly as it creates a near perfect balance. Place the spinning gyroscope on a taut string or the edge of a drinking glass, and amazingly it twirls along contentedly. The gyroscope is more than a toy — gyro-controlled guidance and navigational systems are used on ships, airplanes and even spacecraft. Have you ever wondered how those two-wheeled

Segway Personal Transporters maintain their balance? Gyroscopic sensors.

As a kid I got hours of entertainment out of my gyroscope until the day it fell and dented the inner wheel. From that point on, it shuddered when it should have spun; its balance was forever compromised.

Most people I meet truly want balance in their lives. Unfortunately, it isn't as easy as pulling a string and watching life twirl contentedly. Through life's ups and downs, we accumulate a few dents; we shudder when we should be spinning.

Balance has been compromised.

Being out of balance is not intentional with most people. Nobody starts out to sabotage the equilibrium in his or her life. It just happens. Unfortunately, work is often an accomplice in chipping away at that inner wheel that keeps us spinning smoothly. I remember when I first started out in my career, the job was all consuming. I not only worked six days a week, I worked most evenings, as well. I wasn't trying to neglect my family or my own health, it's simply what I thought was expected of me. As a matter of fact, life actually felt pretty good. I seemed to be accomplishing a great deal, and people honestly

appeared pleased with my work. I was spinning fast, and no one tried to slow

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insure that balance returned to our lives.

We talk a lot about our work/life balance, but I suggest the focus should actually be on balancing our life's work. The priority must always be on life and how work can be a supportive element in that process. When work is the priority and life becomes merely a supporting element, that's when everything begins to wobble. So here are three suggestions to help prevent the wobbles and keep you balanced.

(1) List Your Priorities

Through the years, I have found this little exercise helpful when making crucial decisions. List, side-by-side, the advantages and disadvantages of each possible decision. When all the possibilities are spelled out before your eyes, it may help you make a more informed and wise decision. In a similar manner, list your major priorities in order of importance to you. Start with what you consider to be most valuable in life (family, marriage, contentment, spiritual matters, work, clients, etc.), and work your way down to the lesser priorities (hobbies, discretionary choices, etc.).

Next to each priority, assign an honest estimate of the time you devote to that concern. If you notice that your higher priorities are receiving a disproportionate lack of your time and energy, be assured that you are out of balance. You can delude yourself into thinking that quality time can compensate for quantity of time, but it simply isn't true.

(2) Learn to Say "No"

Our egos are easily manipulated; everyone loves to feel needed! So when someone of influence appeals to your ego and suggests that your help is vital to a critical project, or only you are capable of getting the job done, it becomes hard to

say no. I know; I've allowed my ego to talk me into accepting unnecessary

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(3) Lean on Technology, Don't Labor Under It

I marvel at the technological advancements of the twenty-first century. In college, I did all my term papers using a used manual typewriter long before little bottles of correction fluid were even a wistful dream. My goal at the time was to own an IBM Selectric typewriter with a built-in correction ribbon. Today, you can't even give one away for a boat anchor! I can't imagine trying to do my job without the word processing wizardry of a PC.

From cell/data phones (named after various fruits) to instant information via the Internet, the technology of today is astounding. Software that makes your job easier and more productive is a must-have for most businesses. Just a word of caution: Technology was intended to reduce our work week and make life easier. But in too many cases we've allowed it to do just the opposite. The problem is not technology, it is the user. It is so easy to get caught up with the need for the latest technology that we suddenly find ourselves being controlled rather than being in control. You know what I mean — constantly checking email, never turning off the phone, always being available to everyone. When that happens, you will find yourself wobbling out of control. Technology is a wonderful partner but a terrible taskmaster. Lean on it and you will find stability. Labor under it and you'll shudder through life unbalanced.

I have a birthday coming up in the near future, and I think I will put a gyroscope on my list. It would be a vivid reminder as to the importance of balance. This time I'll watch more carefully. I'll guard that inner ring because life is too precious to let it accidentally fall out of balance.

For the other articles in the Work/Life Balance Series see below:

[Saying Yes is Also Saying No](#)

[Good Work/Life Balance Comes From Good Workflow](#)

[Whistle While You Work](#)

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