

Life Balance? Forgetaboutit!

By Tim Batdorf

I promised you that in our monthly column we would give you new ideas and information. Here's a refreshing take on the tired (yet relevant) subject of "life balance." This piece was submitted by Tim Batdorf, an outstanding human being who, among other endeavors, happens to practice law. I met Tim in 2007 when he and I both participated in the first WLAM-sponsored "Happy Healthy Lawyers" symposium at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. The following year, Tim, as the chairperson for the International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers, invited me to speak at the association's annual event in Plymouth, and the rest, as they say, is history. Tim is an avid supporter of attorney wellness who also gives of his time as a Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program (LJAP) volunteer. I, for one, appreciate the choices that Tim makes in his personal quest for life balance.

—Martha D. Burkett,
Program Administrator, LJAP

Two words send a shiver down the spine of every senior, big dog, el supremo, head-of-the-law-firm, legal-beagle type in the country: life balance.

In the legal profession, the words "life balance" have generally come to mean that we not only have to work our tushies off as lawyers, we also have to feel bad about our careers because we *should* have spent more quality time with our families. (Query: Is sitting on the couch watching *Celebrity Dance Off* considered "quality time"?)

For lawyers who take it seriously, life balance is derived through a highly complex formula (think quantum mechanics) that looks something like this:

Life Balance = BH z QT > /%
(don't forget to carry the 1)

Analyzing the life-balance formula generally requires an advanced math degree and usually results in severe migraine headaches or, in more extreme cases, minor head implosions, which, by the way, do not support life balance whatsoever. In fact, a key way to regain life balance is to forego calculating the life-balance formula altogether.

What in the world does life balance mean anyway?

Life balance is not about ensuring that every moment of your life is spent in the most precise way to please your boss, your parents, your spouse, or your kids. Life balance is not yet another way to prove how far you fall short of some grandiose vision of perfection. Life balance is not about filling your life with all the stuff you "should" do.

Life balance is about choice. That's it. That's all.

Every moment of every day, you decide how you want to live your life. Your actions—the things you do daily—speak volumes about what's most important to you. And there's nothing wrong with your choices. Just be honest about them.

If you would really rather stay at work than meet your obnoxious cousin for lunch, don't lie—at least not to yourself. You're making a choice.

If you'd really rather sleep in than go to work, you're making a choice.

If you'd really rather stay at work and miss the birth of your first child (presumably you're male?), you're making a choice.

But we've all become a bunch of mealy-mouthed, paper-pusher, people-pleaser, do-gooder (at least we want to look like we're do-gooder) types. We want it all, we want it now, and we want to look good while we're doing it.

But it ain't gonna happen.

Life is about making choices.

To be the best biker in the world, Lance Armstrong chose to train *all* the time. Tiger Woods is a complete and utter maniac in how he practices his golf swing. While everyone in the world agreed that Michael Jordan was the best basketball player on the planet, he was the first one on the practice court and the last to leave. Each of these guys made choices that led to prowess in their respective fields.

And lots of regular folks (think moms and dads) choose to make a priority of things like their kids' soccer games and dance recitals. Apparently these moments are not something they are willing to sacrifice.

You can be a great lawyer. You can be a great mother or father, son or daughter, brother or sister. You can be a great golfer, skier, bird watcher, bridge player, hiker, biker, or soccer striker. But you probably can't be great at everything, at every moment, all the time. You have to choose.

Life Balance = Life Choices. (Now that's a formula you can get behind.)

The way you choose to live your life—the way in which you spend your time—is the ultimate reflection of who you are and what's important to you.

So stop kidding yourself. Make your choices. And own up to them. ■

Tim Batdorf is a lawyer, career coach, and the founder of Lawyer & Self™, which produces The Lawyer's Career Kit™—a self-coaching program for lawyers. For more information, visit www.lawyerandself.com.