Ralph Waldo Emerson said:

“If a man loses pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured, or far away.”

Do you feel stressed out, misunderstood in relationships, overwhelmed as a parent or overworked as an employee? Do you struggle with depression or worry or negativity? Are you stuck in your career despite being very good at what you do? Do you receive complaints about how you get along with fellow workers? Do your loved ones complain that you are absent or about your mood swings?

Perhaps you need balance!?
Natalie Gahmann, a Success Coach says:
“Balance is a feeling derived from being whole and complete; it's a sense of harmony. It is essential to maintaining quality in life and work.
“Your life is made up of many vital areas including your health, family, financial, intellectual, social, work, spiritual, recreation, personal growth, romance and more. You won't necessarily spend time every day in each area in equal amounts, but if in the long run, you spend a sufficient quantity and quality of time in each area, your life will feel in balance. However, if you neglect any one area, never mind two or three, you will eventually sabotage your own success. Much like a table, if one leg is longer or shorter than the rest, it will make the entire table wobbly. For instance, if you don't take care of your health, your family and social life will suffer; if you put too much time into running your business, personal relationships and self-care may suffer.”

Due to stress and an out of control job at the gym Bill urgently needed a few days off work, but he knew that his boss would never allow him to take them. So he said, “Maybe if I act crazy, the boss will tell me to take a few days off.” So Tom hung upside down from a bar near the ceiling.
Judy, his assistant, came in and saw him and said; “What do you think you are doing?”
Bill told her that he was pretending to be a light bulb so the boss would think he was going crazy and give him a few days off. “Well, that will never work!” said Judy, and stomped off. Five minutes later when Bill’s face had turned scarlet the boss came into the gym and saw Bill. He asked him, “Just what do you think you are doing?” “I am a light bulb!” said Bill.

The boss said, “Look here, you’re clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days.”

Bill jumped down and walked out of the gym. When Mary started to follow him, the boss asked her, “And where do you think you’re going, young lady?”

With a straight face she replied, “I’m going home too, I can't work in the dark!”

There is little doubt today that most of us experience stress and not having enough time. We understand time as the space between events, and so when that space gets contracted with devices and technology that speed things up, we tend to try to cram more and more into ever less space.

In the recent past we all used to use snail mail for all our mail. We had to take the time to sit down to write a letter, seal it, stamp it, and take it to the mailbox. Then a mail person would come and put it into the truck and take it eventually back to the post office where it would be sorted and sent to its destination where a similar process would take place. So there would be space between a letter and its reply.

But today, with email, that process is almost instant. And so we write more letters and think we have saved time, which in one sense we have. But in another sense we have lost the space between events, and that is exactly how we experience the feeling of having enough time. And so our stress levels go up!

Modern technology connects us all on many levels. We feel the need to respond to every personal email, every phone call, every snail mail letter, every cell phone text message. You know the drill. We text when we are waiting for our child at school. I often see couples walking down the street, apparently together, and instead of enjoying the moment together, one of them is on a cell phone for blocks.

We try to do ever more things and then run out of time, so we do fast food rather than make a meal, or text when driving, hoping not to get caught. We schedule meetings during and after work ad infinitum. We work long hours to please the folks or boss at work and then we work into the evening as well. We watch the news while eating supper and stress out about the world. We return to the email and spend the evening on the computer and finally drag ourselves into bed.

And something that usually gets compromised is our special time with the ones we love. Why is it that our most dear get the short end of the stick?
The Quran stresses that we need balance and that God sends down to us healing for the diseases of the heart, one of which is stress. We are meant to eat of the good things of life, but stay in balance. Excess in any one thing isn’t good for you, the Quran says.

The Sikhs says that all the ups and downs of life, all our current challenges, our so-called lacks, are just illusions. They are part of the play of God set into the nature of things so that we may learn to live in love and learn to let go of the things that don’t matter. We can live in balance, and when we do so we will experience our own infinite selves.

The Christian New Testament says that there are nine qualities of spiritual maturity and balance. They are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. These are gifts that come from God’s spirit being active in our lives.

The Buddhists teach that simple living is a great key to life. Buddhist practice attempts to strip away the rat race, the addictions and fears of life so that we can focus on what is essential—our spiritual journey, our family, our self-compassion, and compassion for the earth. We can become awake and free, living a balanced life, not attached to gain or loss, praise or blame, fame or shame or happiness or hopelessness.

And wise old King Solomon of the Jews says that we are to enjoy our lives, for the things we run after are like chasing the wind and thus vanity.

What were you like as a child? I can remember being so excited to wake up each morning I could not wait to go out to play outside. I was filled with joy as a child and was blessed because I knew what Deepak Chopra says joy is about. He says that “joy is a return to a deep harmony of body, mind, and spirit that was yours at birth and that can be yours again. That openness to love, that capacity for wholeness with the world around you, is still within you!”

So if all the religions are in basic agreement about a balanced life, what do we need to get there? Why is it so difficult?

One thing that most life coaches agree on for a balanced life is to get our priorities right. Jesus was a life coach, as was the Buddha and Mohammed and the Gurus of India. All talk about getting the priorities right. What are the priorities? Love, peace and joy!

It is important for us all to identify our values and align our lives around them. We need to do this for our personal and professional priorities. When you are no longer serving your true values, have the guts to say no to anything that does not serve them. When you do this at work or in your home, you will raise the whole place up a notch just by saying no.

I remember once being asked to deliver mislabeled fish cartons because it was a saving to the company. I refused to deliver them. I thought of this recently with the horse meat
scandal, in which horse meat was labeled beef. Somebody blew the whistle on that one, and the company will eventually be better off.

That is a hard call, especially when you lose your job over it. Thank God, here in America there is legal recourse when someone is fired for upholding the law. It is a tough row to hoe, but is it vital for the good of the world. And yes, your stress levels will go up at first, but long term, when you are living within your values, your joy level will get greater!

Life coaches tell us to get our lives organized! That is hard at first and takes time, but after it is done and kept up, organization will free you. You need to plan for emergencies so that you know what to do when trouble comes. Shingle your roof when it is dry outside. Don’t wait for the rains to come!

Go with the flow, be flexible, readjust, make new choices, forgive yourself a lot, get rid of your idea that everything must be perfect. Only some things require that level, but quite often all that is necessary is a job well done to reasonable standards. Perfection can kill you. Give it up unless it is a specific goal that will better humanity that requires deep precision. Then go for it and be glad and proud when you achieve the goal.

Put healthy routines into your life on a daily basis. Relax, exercise faithfully, lift weights, walk or run or cycle, eat good healthy food, take time to meditate and pray. Plan the next day the night before and then walk into it with confidence and head held high. Take breaks, drink lots of water, get out into nature. Figure out when you perform best and then use those times creatively.

Got a big project in mind? Create a support network for yourself of friends and experts who will help you. Don’t struggle on as if there was no help available. People love to help us if we ask them. We develop trust when we in turn offer to help them. That is to invest in an emotional bank account with them. Do you have a positive balance in your relationship accounts with others or are you always asking for help? A balanced life always keep positive balance in emotional bank accounts with others. Kindness is always our best deposit! And we can be kind to absolutely anyone!

Then lastly, take the Buddha’s advice and simplify your life!

Eliminate the unimportant or what can be called the tyranny of the urgent. Few things are as urgent as they seem. Uncomplicate your life. Stop over-scheduling it. Put things in instead that you enjoy doing. Put your loved one back in and make him or her a high priority.

Let’s be aware that the person we deceive most is frequently our own self.

When we say I am busy all the time, we tend to think that the frantic pace of our lives is temporary and therefore we can endure it. However it soon becomes for us a new normal. Joy simply cannot get into our lives because we are too busy!! Peace goes out
the window. Stress comes in the door, and we remain the same, or worse, because we have the knowledge to change but do not.

If this is you today, someone who knows what to do but still feels helpless with stress, listen up. You need help. You need someone to encourage you to go on. That special project you have put off, that new job you are afraid to apply for, that benefit that you qualify for but have not taken the steps to get, that woman or man you want to work with or date but have done nothing about because of the risk of rejection. What is holding you back from putting into practice all you know?

If it was someone else, you would know what advice to give, wouldn’t you? But it’s you, and you are stuck!

Answer? You need a friend and to be a friend, and then like magic you will get unstuck!

Scott Adams always wanted to be a cartoonist but never knew how to go about it. One day he saw a PBS program on cartooning, and so Adams wrote to the host Jack Cassidy and asked his advice about how to enter the profession. Cassidy wrote back and answered all of Adams’ specific questions and then added these lines. “Don’t get discouraged if you get rejected at first. Your cartoons are good!”

So Adams got very excited, finally understanding how the process worked. He submitted cartoons to Playboy and the New Yorker. Those magazines quickly rejected him with cold, photocopied form letters. Discouraged, Scott put his art supplies away and decided to forget about cartooning. Rejection was too stressful!

A year later, out of the blue, Jack Cassidy wrote to Scott Adams again. He said “Sometimes encouragement is hard to come by. That is why I am encouraging you to hang in there and keep drawing.”

Scott was profoundly touched by the letter and drafted the sample strips that would eventually become Dilbert, which appears in over 700 newspapers and six books today. He is on the web too, and you can tweet Dilbert anywhere in the world.

Yet Scott Adams says that he feels certain that he would not have tried cartooning again if Jack had not sent that letter. That simple act of kindness changed the world of Scott Adams, and today he wishes to pass that same message on.

He says, “Some gifts are meant to be passed on, not repaid. All of us know someone who would benefit from a kind word. I want to encourage you to act on it. For the biggest impact, commit it to writing and do it for someone who knows that you have nothing to gain. It’s important to give encouragement to family and friends, for their happiness and yours are inseparable. Do it for someone who can’t return the favor. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.”

When you have time for acts of kindness, when you stop what you are doing to help another person in trouble, when you have time for your neglected self, something else
will start to happen. Your life will take on a kind of magic, and you will discover another much Greater Friend.

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, “How heavy is this glass of water?” Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500g. The lecturer replied, “The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes.” Are you holding on to a weight that has become too heavy? You need a Friend. Let go, and give the weight to God. Trust me, the weight is nothing for God. And you as God’s child will be free. You will be in balance again and recover the joy you had as a little child…

For joy is a return to the deep harmony of body, mind and spirit that was yours at birth when you first came from God through your parents. It can be yours again. That openness to LOVE, that capacity for wholeness with the world around you, is still within you. It is the sound of a different drum…