

A Tightrope Life

Category: Finding Balance

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | March 1, 2023

Now a retired seventy-five-year-old woman, I thought that finding balance would be easy after spending many years juggling my life as a single mother to a son and daughter, as a teacher of middle school students and then a consultant at a local university's Writing Center, and eventually as the caregiver for my two elderly parents. I was wrong.

My challenge now is finding balance between the past and present. I strive to turn each day into a memorable one—a day that contains at least one special experience, a day that doesn't devolve into lethargy, a day that embraces the present and fearlessly faces the future, with its ultimate—and rapidly approaching—mortality.

To try to achieve a reasonable balance in my current life, I spend a few minutes every morning before doing my ablutions to plan my day. I make sure I focus on one goal that will make me happy: reading more of my latest Kindle book, writing several pages in my journal, or walking the halls of my apartment building while listening to the Broadway music I love. I also promise myself to engage in one necessary but unwelcome chore: dusting, vacuuming, doing laundry, or grocery shopping. When I succeed in accomplishing what I set out to do, I feel a sense of inner satisfaction; the world remains my stage, and I continue to be an active performer—and director—in the theatre that is my life. When I fail, however, I become the understudy who never gets even a single moment in the spotlight.

For me, the most unsurmountable obstacle lying between a balanced and an unbalanced life is the past. The older I get, the more my mind plays movies of my youth—a time when Dad, Ma, and Grandma were there to care for my external and internal wounds. I can lose myself for hours in my memories, but, ultimately, I must return to the present and realize that these beloved family members are gone, that my two adult children live far away, and that it would take only one accidental fall or sudden illness to land me in a facility and make my life an unbalanced one dominated by impending death.

Despite the formidable obstacles involved in living a life of balance at my age—a life that gives me control over my destiny—I remain determined to accept this challenge. I opt for walking the tightrope, always looking toward the far end of the taut line ahead of me and never staring into the void beneath me.

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