



Finding Balance and Meaning

By Mike Cook

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I have actually heard people say that the way they are at work is “not really the way they are.” I cannot think of a sadder declaration about the conditions of one’s life than that. Work should not be a life sentence for suffering.

The idea of work-life balance is an illusion we create. The reality is that we have only one life, about one third of which we spend earning a living.

So, how do you want to live your life, in and out of work? That’s the question everyone seeking happiness and a sense of balance should be asking. What are your conditions of satisfaction? What are your material aspirations? How much do you need to earn to meet them? How much are your time and skills worth? What kinds of people do you prefer to work with? What kind of work really turns you on, makes you sing?

I encourage people who are grappling with these questions to see the workplace as an ideal setting for personal growth and transformation. This quest is what I call “walking around spirituality.” It means treating your job as your life’s work—behaving and interacting with clients, coworkers, and customers in such a way that you enrich yourself and all those who come in contact with you.

Those among us who are the most fun and inspiring to work with are leading satisfying lives. They are not necessarily the highest paid or highest placed folks in the organization—that may not even be their prime motivation. We admire these people because they are true to themselves. They have found a balance, not between life and work, but between being and doing.

They are being who they want to be, and doing what they want to do. Here are some simple guidelines that might very well help you find more meaning and balance in your work and life.

- **Follow your calling.** Unless you have a calling to the work, there is a high probability that it will not be done well. The people who feel happy and satisfied at



work at those who are working well at something they consider important. Some of the time it will be interesting, some of the time it will be entertaining, and some of the time it will be boring and difficult. But even when it is boring or difficult, it should still feel important to you.

- **Work in a state of awareness.** Day-to-day life in the workplace can be dangerous because the opportunities to go to sleep, or operate on automatic, abound. Try to be fully aware of your behavior and decisions and what your life’s mission and purpose are. Stay awake to each opportunity for self-growth and knowledge.
- **Embrace interdependency and interconnection.** One of the great paradoxes of life is that we are put here in separate compartments, and yet we are always part of something much greater than ourselves, something that we affect and something that affects us. Whatever we do or don’t do has an impact on the lives of others—that is just the way it is. Therefore, we have a certain responsibility to each other, which is also true in the place we work.
- **Take responsibility.** Many people in today’s world are not getting everything they need, either in life or in the workplace, and they are beginning to suspect that maybe this has something to do with *them*, not their circumstances. Take responsibility for your peace of mind, personal transformation, or attitude overhaul. The workplace is a perfect laboratory as you search for your own truth, for the obvious reason that you spend so much of your life there.
- **Stay young.** Staying young boils down to waking each morning with a sense that you still have places to go and things to do, and you are grateful for the opportunity to have a future. Make your life into a learning experience from beginning to end, and from nine to five. Meet life on its own terms and adopt a student’s mind in doing so.
- **Express gratitude.** In many people’s experience, the single most missing element in their day-to-day work lives is appreciation. Remind yourself, through the practice of saying thank you—that other people at work don’t have to support you; their support is a gift. That they get paid is immaterial to the notion of your being grateful.

If you sense the “something is just not right” in your work life, consider that what you may actually be sensing is a gap between your “being” and your “doing” that is causing you discomfort. How do you want to “be” in your job and in your life? In the workplace setting, the most satisfied and successful players are those who have found a way to integrate spiritual common sense (being) with exceptional workplace behavior and business performance (doing).

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We welcome your inquiries about Vitalwork. Please contact us at 585.387.9222 or through our web site at www.vitalwork.com.