Balanced Life

Having a balanced life is crucial to our overall well being. People with a well-rounded lifestyle generally tend to be happier, healthier and more productive. But what does it mean to have a balanced life?

Well, several research sources have shown that it constitutes multiple components, which focuses on family stability, physical health, emotional health, financial state, career, social interactions and many more.

This particular section looks only at seven main components of a balanced life and they are depicted by the puzzle diagram shown below. Please note that having a balanced life is an ongoing process and there are other components that you can plug into the puzzle.

You may have encountered colleagues, friends or someone you know, whom had dropped out of their programs abruptly or took time off because they were so-called 'burnt out'. With the grueling demand of daily activities, you can easily lose yourself in this myriad of never-ending busyness.

By exploring these individual components and recognize the areas that require attention, you can take better care of yourself and thus strive for a healthy and well-balanced life.

Tips

1. **Family and Relationships**
   
   Create personal standards/goals, instead of abiding to society’s demand, for what you want in a family or a relationship. For example, communicating with your partner as to who will stay at home after the birth of a child or setting a common goal with your supervisor as to where your project is directing. Work towards those standards/goals and build good relationships with those involved along the way. A neglected family or relationship creates dissatisfaction and leads to unhappiness.

2. **Exercise**
   
   Good physical health is important for a balanced life. Research sources have recommended that adults do at least 30 minutes of exercise per day and work on cardio strengthening, muscle building and stretching activities. Try to make it fun—take the stairs instead of the elevator, go to the gym with a buddy or participate in campus recreation activities. If you have children, take them skiing at the local ski hill or participate in indoor wall climbing.
3. Healthy eating
The key is to have a concise meal-planning strategy for you and your family as this will help alleviate stress during meal preparations. Packing a nutritious lunch once or twice a week not only enforces you to eat well, but also saves some money. And learn to recognize the five main food groups as indicated by Canada’s food guide, which will help you in choosing healthier meal options.

4. Social
All work and no play isn’t exactly a well-rounded lifestyle. We need to actively seek out things that we enjoy doing. For example, go to that conference or seminar that your department has been advertising—it’s an excellent opportunity to network. Maybe take on new hobbies such as snowboarding or horseback riding.

5. Finance
Having good finances create stability and therefore an ease of mind. Bad finances lead to unnecessary stress and sometimes conflicts among family members. Learn how to budget properly and prioritize your spending. Thinking ahead is often the simplest step to financial security. Do not rely heavily on credit cards as this can easily spiral into heavy debt.

6. Mental and Spiritual
Sometimes, overwhelming workload and uncontrolled circumstances can break the will of even the strongest person. Try breathing exercises, for example, closing your eyes and breathing deeply while consciously slowing down your breathing. And take note of how you feel. If you require spiritual guidance or need someone to talk to, check out the listing of campus resources below. Remember, getting help to better yourself isn’t a shame, it’s a celebration.

7. Career
“What are your plans after you graduate?” This question has certainly been asked on numerous occasions and it might be the last thing on your mind, while you are barely struggling to fulfill TA-ship, RA-ship, courses, etc. Well, it’s never too late to start planning ahead. Besides, you can take comfort in that much of what you do as a graduate student is excellent training for a professional position.

Activities to Do On Your Own
- Plan out tomorrow’s routine today: Pick out and set aside what you’ll be wearing for tomorrow, if they need ironing, do that now. Pack a nutritious lunch such as: your favourite sandwich or simple stir-fry. Stow them in the fridge in the mean time. Prepare for tomorrow’s dinner by making extras—leftovers can be packed into smaller portions for future meals. If you prefer not to cook your meal in advance, then prepare just the raw ingredients for use when required. Make a list of the things/chores that you have to do tomorrow.
- Take a physical break: Bring your running shoes to work and use the gym facilities in the Van Vliet centre. Remember to bring your Onecard. If you prefer, go running/walking around the Pavilion or the Clare Drake Arena. If the weather is nice, ask a colleague or friend for a stroll around campus, there are scenic paths within walking distances. Thirty minutes is all you need to rejuvenate yourself for the rest of the day!
- Budget frequently: See the Budget Management module for Personal and Family Budgeting sheets.
- Write down all the things that you are currently doing which boost your skills. For example, teaching, giving talks and/or presentations, communication skills, community service involvement, etc.
- Relax and spend quality time with your family and/or friends: Plan activities for this upcoming weekend—get together for dinner or have a movie night. The key is to take time to inform everyone and plan in advance.
Related Topics

- Budget Management
- Stress Management
- Strategies to Enhance Life and Work Balance for Women

Other Resources

Family and Relationships

- Students' Counseling Services: [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/counselling/index.cfm](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/counselling/index.cfm)
- Graduate Students' Association Child Subsidy Program: [http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/GSA/Services](http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/GSA/Services)
- UofA's Collective Agreements on graduate student maternity and parental leave: [http://gsa.whitematter.ca/index.php/advocacy/content/C6/](http://gsa.whitematter.ca/index.php/advocacy/content/C6/)
- Alberta Government Children Services' (info on Child Care Subsidy program, family support for children with disabilities, and many more useful tips for parenting): [http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/index.cfm](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/index.cfm)
- Other online sites, such as:
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/relationships/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/relationships/)
  - [http://www2.oprah.com/relationships/relationships_landing.jhtml](http://www2.oprah.com/relationships/relationships_landing.jhtml)

Physical Health

- UofA Campus Recreation: [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/campusrec/](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/campusrec/)
- Public Health Agency of Canada (health issues for children, youth, seniors, men, women, aboriginals): [http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.ca](http://www.canadianhealthnetwork.ca)
- BBC Health: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/)
Healthy Eating

- UofA Health Info Brochure Rack: http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/healthinfo/
- Health Nuts—UofA student group promoting healthy eating and nutrition (including easy recipes and helpful kitchen tips): http://www.ualberta.ca/~healthnt/
- UofA Campus Food Bank: http://www.ualberta.ca/~foodbank/
- Recipe ideas and where to buy good quality produce in Alberta: http://www.foodtv.ca and http://www.growingalberta.com
- Dieticians of Canada (for a variety of nutrition resources and activities): http://www.dietitians.ca

Social

- International Centre’s calendar of events: http://www.international.ualberta.ca
- Students’ Union also organizes weekly events: http://www.su.ualberta.ca
- Local events and concerts: http://www.ticketmaster.ca
- Jubilee Auditorium: http://www.jubileeauditorium.com/northern
- Edmonton Sport and Social Club: http://www.edmontonsportsclub.com
- City of Edmonton: http://www.edmonton.ca

Finance

- Graduate Students’ Association Emergency Bursaries at: http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca
- Graduate Students’ Association Professional Development Grants (assists graduate students attending conferences or doing research for their thesis): http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca

Mental and Spiritual

- UofA Student Counseling Services (offers 12 free sessions per academic year for graduate students): http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/counselling
- Edmonton Distress Line: 780-482-HELP (for immediate help, open 24 hours)
- Students’ Union Distress Centre: http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services_and_businesses/services/student_distress_centre
- UofA Chaplains’ Association: http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/chaplains/
- The Support Network (Edmonton): http://www.thesupportnetwork.com
- BBC Religion: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/
Career

- UofA Career and Placement Services: http://www.ualberta.ca/CAPS/

Other

- http://www.programs.alberta.ca/Living
- http://www.wright.edu/admin/wellness