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## Balanced Living – June 2020

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### Strategies to Living the Life You Want

You may have a profession at which you excel and a nice house in a good neighborhood. But it's time for some serious reevaluation if you still wonder when the fun starts or what you'll be when you grow up.

"Success doesn't necessarily lead to fulfillment," says David A. Shapiro, coauthor of several books, including "Repacking Your Bags: Lighten Your Load for the Rest of Your Life." "Unless you take time to formulate your own definition of success, you can reap many rewards in life but still have a sense of hollowness associated with them."

Here are some suggestions on how you can develop your own vision of "the good life" and find ways to balance life's demands with your personal goals and interests.



#### Take a daily timeout

"It's easy to forget about yourself when you're busy each day concentrating on the business at hand," says Mr. Shapiro.

To learn more about yourself and develop a personal mission statement, take 15 minutes each day to write in a journal about things you care about.

Among the questions you should ask and answer: Am I living in a place I belong? Am I doing the right work? Do I know why I do the work I do? Does all this make me happy?

"To develop a sense of who you really are, it's important you explore where you live, who you love, your work and your purpose," Mr. Shapiro says. You don't have to work on your whole life at the same time. "The important part is to start looking at your life in detail," Mr. Shapiro says.

## Talk to others

While you're reevaluating your life's purpose, talk to your spouse, other family members, close friends and co-workers who can provide valuable insight.

Ask them questions you're also asking yourself, such as: What do you think my purpose in life is? Where do you think is the right place for me?

"Use your friends and family as sounding boards and engage in courageous conversations," says Mr. Shapiro. "People tend not to recognize their own talents and liabilities."

## Study the options

Of course, you probably have responsibilities that may prevent you from acting on the changes you want to make. But don't assume you don't have options.

"There may be the opportunity to do something different if you simply explore it with whoever else in your life is depending on you," Mr. Shapiro says.

## Take your time

Don't make the mistake of making modifications immediately after you've gained a clearer sense of purpose. Mr. Shapiro doesn't recommend making drastic knee-jerk changes, such as moving to a new city.

Also, keep in mind that the changes you make don't have to be sizable. "Incremental changes can have a profound impact," Mr. Shapiro says.

So can the act of self-exploration. "When you know why you're doing what you're doing, you tend to be more effective, more energized and more excited to get up in the morning," Mr. Shapiro says.

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# Encouraging Workplace Diversity

The workplaces of the 21st Century are becoming increasingly diverse. Most organizations employ a variety of people of different cultural backgrounds, religions, sexual preferences, nationalities, and others. Regardless of your personal biases or fears, the workplace is changing. It's important for you to understand that your professional reputation and future success will depend on your ability to accept and embrace the differences of others.

## Diversity Opportunities

Having a variety of cultures, opinions, and experience can bring new perspectives, innovative ideas and out-of-the-box thinking. However, this variety can also lead to miscommunication and disagreements that might lead to conflicts in the workplace. For example, if you accidentally offend someone by not understanding the element that makes that individual a diverse member of your workforce, offer an immediate and sincere apology. Explain that you didn't understand or recognize the root of the issue. If someone says something offensive to you, consider that they might not be aware of the diversity issues at hand. Calmly explain why their actions or language was inappropriate.

## Opening the Lines of Communication

Oftentimes, differences are so apparent that they can dominate our immediate impressions and weigh heavily on our reactions, interactions and behavior. Through the development of the working relationship, professionalism, and workplace coaching, those differences will fade, allowing positive working relationships to form.

Here are some basic rules of communication to help those with differences interact with each other:

- Avoid commenting on the cultural, ethnic or racial background, or sexual orientation of a coworker.
- Actively listen to what's said, pay attention to others, and look out for the visual cues that indicate how well the exchange is going. Be responsive and engaged in the conversation.
- Avoid casual, off-color comments or jokes that might be offensive or that poke fun at others.

## Being a Part of the Team

No matter what the element is that makes someone diverse, every individual in the workplace wants to be judged for his or her performance, professionalism, and personal success. When labels and stereotypes are allowed to become "workplace identities," they can impede the sense of accomplishment anyone wants to feel.

Encouraging diversity includes giving diverse employees the opportunity to "fit in" with the rest of the workforce. Involve diverse employees in your life. You can invite them to lunch, talk to them in the break room, and even ask how things are going outside of work. Inclusion is a very powerful tool when supporting diversity.

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