

EXERCISE: Creating balance

Eating right, getting enough sleep, relaxing, and meditating will help you restore balance to your life. Let's look at the other areas of your life. In this exercise to create balance in your life, you'll:

1. **Take an inventory.** When completing the Lifestyle Balance Pie in Figure 6.1, you'll determine and evaluate the areas to focus your time and energy on.
2. **Be honest.** This exercise will show you the areas in your life that may need more or less of your attention. When you're done filling out the pie, be honest with yourself about your reaction to the picture it shows. What are your thoughts and feelings? Are there areas in which you want to spend more time? Are fears or discomforts keeping you from doing something? How would you start filling out the neglected areas? When would you begin?
3. **Go with your gut.** When looking at your pie, you may find several areas that you feel could use more attention, and you probably don't have time to work on all of them at once. Which one is waving its hand wildly and saying, "Me first! Pick me!" Follow your instinct. It's easier – and more fun – to work on the area you're drawn to first.
4. **Plan and prepare.** To pay more attention to the neglected areas, you'll need to make time for them, otherwise they won't get done. Focusing on these less-tended areas will take some getting used to. Create a plan that you can stick to.
5. **Get support.** Making changes isn't easy. Rather than struggling and risking failure, get all the outside help and support you can. You might ask loved ones, friends, colleagues, or seek professional help.
6. **Balance.** Your pie may show that you spend a lot of your time in one area at the expense of others. How much time do you spend on the things that are going well for you? Again, be honest. Is it that specific area that you spend the most time on? All of the areas in your life should be done with moderation and balance in mind. Otherwise, your life becomes unbalanced and one-sided.
7. **Have fun.** If the work you put into balancing your life starts to feel burdensome, back off a bit. You are doing this work to become healthy and whole, not to add more chores to your life. Seek out the fun in all your efforts; have a good time with the new experiences while exploring the other areas of your life. When your life becomes more balanced and well-rounded, the healthier and happier you'll be.

Lifestyle Balance Pie

Use the Lifestyle Balance Pie in Figure 6.1 to represent the different areas in your life.

1. Label each slice with an area of your life that is important to you. For example, family, friends, spirituality, romance, health, work, recreation, personal growth, money, physical surroundings, etc. Refer to your HOV on page 14 for insight.
2. Think of the pie's outer edge as being completely satisfied (10) and the center as being very dissatisfied (0).
3. Rate your level of satisfaction in each of the areas you've listed by placing a dot on the middle line of each pie slice to indicate the level of satisfaction you have in that area.
4. After you rate each slice, connect the dots to create the outside perimeter of your pie. What does it look like? Is it round and full or does it look like some areas are not as filled out as others?
5. Now ask yourself:

Are my true values and priorities reflected here?

Based on what I see, am I living a balanced life?

Am I involved in too many activities? Is there too much on my plate?

How much of my time is spent caring for others? For myself?

What area(s) needs more attention? What needs less attention?

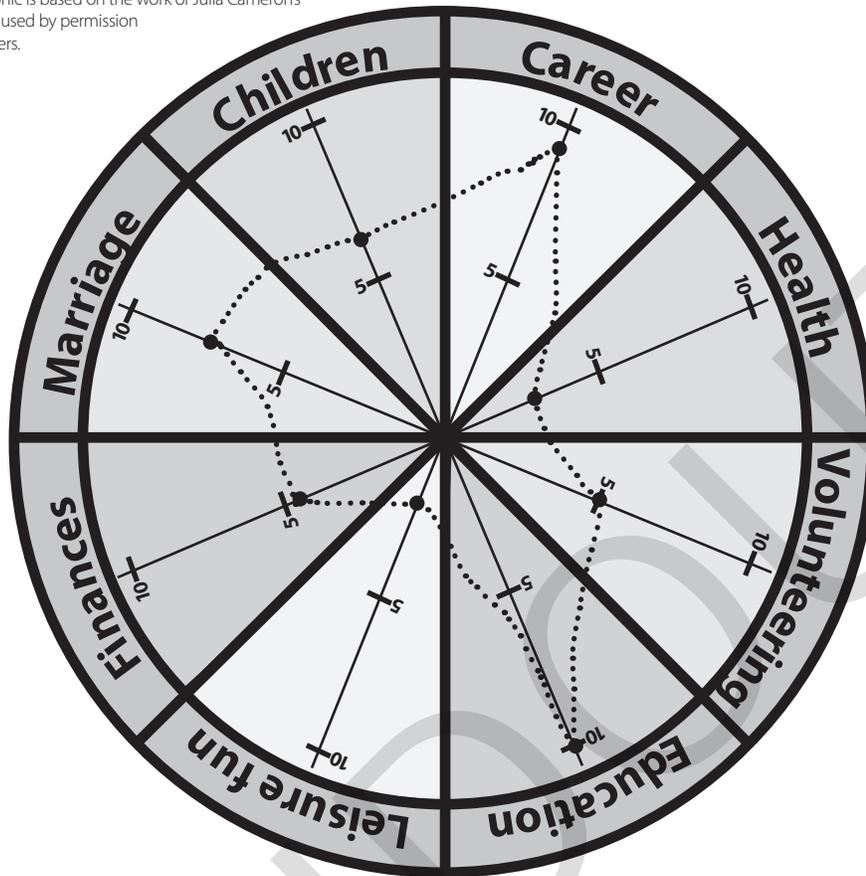
Is there a dream or desire that I'd like to focus on?

What changes do I want to make? What can I do to "round out" my life?

To move yourself toward a more balanced life, allow yourself more time for the areas that show gaps – those places where pieces of your pie are missing (because they are). When doing so, be sure to focus on the whole picture of your life, not just specific areas.

Figure 6.1. **Lifestyle Balance Pie** (example).

This exercise and graphic is based on the work of Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way*, and is used by permission from Penguin Publishers.



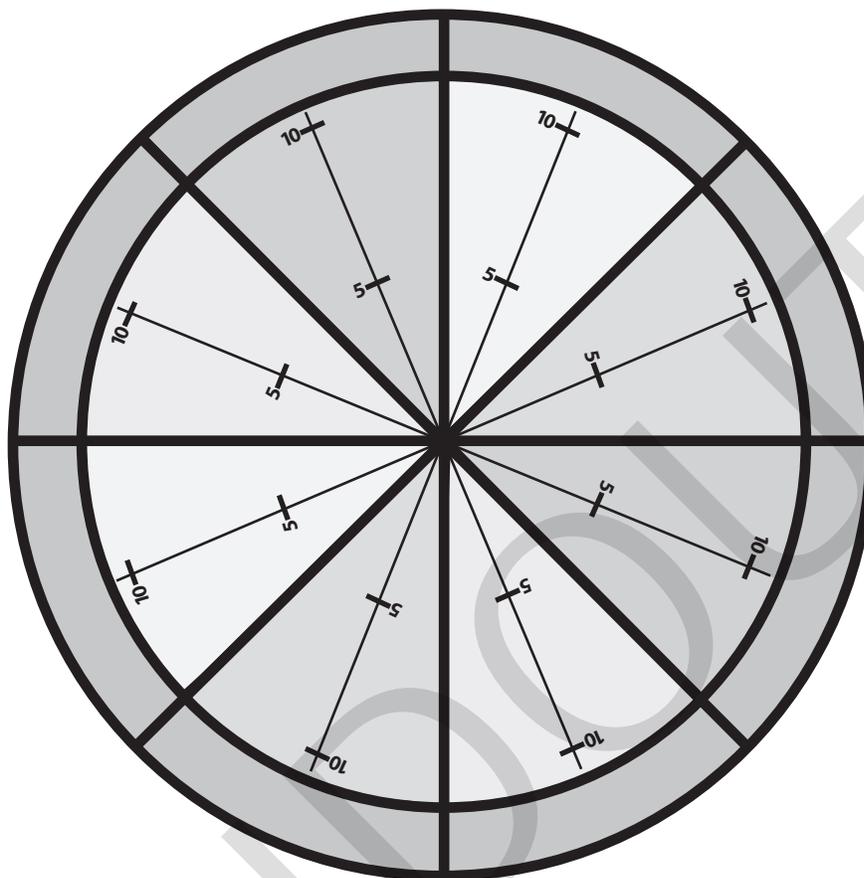
Lowest scores	
Life category	Score
1. Leisure fun	2
2. Health	2.5
3. Finances	4.9
4. Volunteering	5
Highest scores	
4. Children	6
3. Marriage	7.5
2. Career	9
1. Education	10
Plan	
My "Leisure Fun" and "Health" slices got the lowest scores. To increase both, I will join a walking club on MeetUp, which will help me kill two birds with one stone: Have fun and improve my health through exercise.	
When I'm confident that I'm committed to these goals and see improvement in both areas, I'll focus on "Finances," my next lowest score.	

While the goal is never to neglect any area, his top four scores probably don't require the focused attention his bottom scores do.

Idea: Because "Health" covers such a wide variety of topics, he could do a Lifestyle Balance Pie just on that life category — exercise, nutrition, sleep, blood pressure, cholesterol, doctor's appointments, etc.

My Lifestyle Balance Pie

Date _____



Lowest scores	
Life category	Score
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Highest scores	
4.	
3.	
2.	
1.	
Plan	