

Nuggets and Bright Lines

- *Micro cycles*
- *Carl Jung*
- *Running all day*
- *'Everything in moderation'*



Balance

Are you ever struck by the way life has a tendency to achieve a balance. This often seems to involve pendular swings that occur towards the extremes before things become settled, even if just for a while.

This balancing, if we look closely enough, involves micro and macro cycles, where one thing follows another bringing the life and then the death, the beginning and then the end, for it all to start all over again.

Looking at balance, for example, on the subject of great thought breakthroughs and cutting edge evolutionary progress, some believe strongly in the serendipitous nature of open plan offices and work spaces. The idea of this is to facilitate collaboration and communication enhancement to drive forward the creative process. On the other hand there are those who believe in environments that allow maximum concentration with quiet and closed work spaces. Researching around the subject it appears that the best results have occurred as a natural consequence of people being able to both concentrate fully in a quiet and undisturbed place and when appropriate for them, to access a community to help the collaborative part of the process. It seems that neither one on its own is as successful as the combination of the two. A balance of both extremes appears to be provide the best outcomes.

Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist was both a proponent of almost monastic and isolated study for long periods but also had a life with a busy psychiatry practice and a regular and well documented social 'coffee shop' habit.

As with many things there is a wide variation on the spectrum of what constitutes a healthy balance for any given individual. As social animals humans are found to be significantly the less for a lack of interaction and will at the other extreme likely struggle without sufficient meditative or rest and relaxation time. Both it appears are necessary. The answer as to how much of each is optimal is likely to be found within the individual. Experiential learning and self awareness will give valuable insights into the answer to such

questions. One thing is sure and that is that which is heaven to one may well be hell to another.

Athletes who try to run all day and don't rest, those who work all day and don't take breaks and people who sit for long periods and don't move regularly all suffer negative consequences.

As coaches we are guided to tread that fine line with our players between being strong and challenging versus having the softer, friendlier approach. Dan Abrahams calls it stretch or support. We need both it seems to be rounded coaches. Too much of one thing and it does not hit the spot. Ask any player, especially the experienced, about this and they often say how a specific coach always seemed to know what they needed at a particular time. It is a highly valuable skill and one that comes with experience and reflection.

The same applies to rehabilitation. I have spent many hours taking players through from injury to return to play with all the physical and psychological challenges involved. The key understanding that has come from this is the ability to know how much to do, how hard to push a player and when to stop. Do too much and you 'over cook' them with the associated soreness, the effect on the next day's schedule and the risk of complete breakdown. Don't do enough and the player loses confidence and you forfeit valuable time. Better to do the latter and err on the side of caution as with many things of course, but I am sure you get the point.

There has been much talk about internet sabbaticals and internet sabbaths recently with reports of people getting 'burned out' or just plain fatigued by being 'constantly connected'. The internet and all of its associated tools were designed to make lives better. As with so many things is this a case of something designed to be a tool making an extremely bad master?

The topic is deeply discussed by Cal Newport in his book 'Deep Work'. Cal talks frankly about the evidence for balancing our use of the internet in order to be both maximally productive and healthy. It is something so addictive, he says, that we need a conscious vigilance to allow us to recognise its effects on our lives and make the recommended adjustments to maintain a 'healthy balance'. A balance of use where the magnificent leverage of the internet tool enhances our lives without it creeping silently into our relationships and rest time. In the cool light of day there is a healthy middle ground. It is something that needs constant awareness and as Newport says an understanding of the battlefield helps. We certainly may need to initially take stock of how controlled we maybe by tech and how we can regain control so it helps our lives and not dictates our behaviour.

Brian Johnson the prolific philosophical writer and summariser recently wrote about achieving the healthy balance of optimism and realism. I think he recommended hope for breakfast and reality for dinner. What he was promoting are the advantages of setting

your sights high with lofty goals in line with your desires and working diligently and consistently towards them. At the same time, understanding there are many things out of our control and taking a leaf from The Stoics that if something can go wrong it may well do so. Such a balanced view will make it more likely we are able to view events objectively, review our progress and go again without crashing and burning because of an apparent failure.

Such then is the evidence of the benefit of balance in our lives. I think it was my blessed grandmother who used to say, "everything in moderation". Maybe there is some truth in it after all.

The Author

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