



Awareness, Balance and Connection

By Renée Siegel

Awareness, Balance and Connection is a formula or a recipe that one can use as a road-map or guide to increasing our wellness and healing; the ultimate goal of course is increased happiness. In this article, we will review what Awareness, Balance and Connection means and how this can work for you! I have found that this is as good a blueprint as any for laying a wellness foundation for life.

The first concept is Awareness

Most of us are asleep, at least in part. We drive from here to there and remember only parts of our journey. We engage in conversations with others and are texting or reading emails, not truly present to what is going on. We are so easily distracted. There are plenty of illusions that need to be discarded, even when we are seemingly available and present to our situation or circumstances.

Remaining consciously aware of thoughts, feelings, and actions runs contrary to how we are wired. Awareness requires that one step back from our defensive strategies that we use to cope with daily life including denial, minimizing, rationalizing, justifying and blaming and develop a willingness to see what is. Because we suit up to face the world through the use of these defense mechanisms, this can be quite the challenge. Therefore, growing our capacity to remain aware takes practice.

Growing awareness is most easily accomplished by learning to step back from the situation or feeling and practice observation. I call this cultivating the inner observer. By practicing being the observer, one becomes both the observer and the participant. This new perspective is extremely valuable. As an observer, one detaches and looks at the event or thought or emotion. One can learn to get out of one's own way. By looking in at oneself, the observer can often see aspects of the self that are not readily available to the participant. These aspects, one might label negative or positive, but they are all aspects of the self, the whole self.



Cultivating awareness allows one to gather the pieces, owned and disowned and heal toward wholeness. Some of these so-called negative emotions can include guilt, shame, anger, resentment, sadness, hurt, loss or grief. As the observer, alternatives to feelings or behaviors may surface that were unavailable to the participant. Looking at these feelings from the perspective of the observer, opens one up to new options and helps one from replaying the past over and over again. Again, with our biological wiring alone, it is easy to repeat the same limiting or self-destructive behaviors.

Identifying that one has a choice or options helps one to feel empowered and to take responsibility for making the changes that will interrupt the cycle of limiting beliefs or destructive behaviors. Awareness also helps one to remain in the present and not dwell on the past or speculate about the future. The present is really a gift or a present. Real change can only be made in the present. Awareness also lays the groundwork for the other two principles, as without it, achieving balance and connecting to self and others would be difficult, if not impossible.

Balance does not come easily to most people. Living life by participating in moderation, especially with those behaviors one would describe as pleasurable can be a challenge. Our wiring is to move toward pleasure and avoid pain. Basic components of a balanced life include eating the right amount of food, getting enough and restful sleep, and participating in an appropriate and consistent exercise program.

Moderation is the key to balance. When one examines the various aspects of life, i.e. work, play, social, family, financial ...one usually finds that there are some aspects of life that are difficult to balance.

Many times, this step is overlooked because there are rewards for living life out of balance; working too much or meeting the needs of others and not ourselves. We can even justify this by saying to ourselves that we are being a good daughter or son or husband or wife. Often not until health challenges or other consequences of living life out of balance appear, does one really begin to understand the importance of balance or moderation. After acknowledging other potential problems, one can begin to incorporate this new balance in the rest of life. Learning to live in moderation happens through a growing awareness of the negative consequences when one is out of balance.



Engaging in one pleasurable experience to the exclusion of others is also a clue that life is out of balance. Reviewing the various dimensions of wellness can be used as a guide to identify which areas we are doing well with and which need some special attention. Those dimensions will follow at the end of this article.

The last concept is Connection

This is also a very important component of wellness because connection helps one with finding purpose and meaning in life. It is a prerequisite for developing a spiritual program. Real connection to SELF is the foundation for relating to one's Creator, Source, God or "Higher Power" or that which one feels they are a part of.

Connecting to SELF is a process. Most people don't have a good sense of what is important to them or what they stand for. They know what is expected of them by others or what is popular and acceptable. Our SELF wants and requires more than that. Our SELF requires that we accept and appreciate all of who we are.

When one finds it difficult to do this, as we all do at various times in our lives, one can turn to "this power that is greater than the SELF" and ask for guidance or direction. This is a form of prayer. Prayer is a wonderful tool for working this concept. The first step in becoming connected is to look at the self and be honest about what is important in life. This means living with integrity and truth. Through practicing prayer, we automatically connect with this greater power. One expresses themselves through the proclamation in word, thought, feeling or deed.

The more one learns to connect to self, the more one learns to connect to family, friends, their community and the world. This is quite a fulfilling experience because through this practice we grow our realization that we are not alone and are a part of something much bigger than ourselves and an intricate part of that whole.

The 12 Dimensions of Wellness:

- Relationship to Self/ Others
- Spiritual
- Medical/Physical
- Mental/Intellectual
- Emotional/Feeling
- Occupational



- Sexual
- Social
- Rest and Relaxation
- Nutritional
- Financial
- Environmental

As with most cosmic jokes, this formula is as simple and as basic as your ABCs. Let this be your primer and may the force be with you!