

## *How to Have a Balanced Relationship*

Having balance in your relationship is very different from having balance on your own. Picture one person balancing on a gymnastics beam: maybe challenging, but quite doable. Now picture two people. At its best, this picture will show two equals helping to keep each other steadier than one of them would be on his or her own. At its worst, it will show two people, each trying to prove they can do it the *right* way, or worse yet, pushing the other out of the way to get where they want to go.

By learning and practicing a few techniques (just as a gymnast practices balance and other skills for the beam), you can build a relationship that is doing back-flips on the balance beam of life. Here are some tips to having a balanced relationship.

- **Be attentive to each other *first*.** We all have busy lives and too often we put everything else before our relationships. But the key to having balance in your relationship is to be attentive to your partner before all else, as often as possible. This does not have to mean devoting a huge amount of time to each other. It is a matter of attentiveness more than time. In my book “Hello Tarzan” I recommend that women spend 45 minutes a day giving their man attention. This is important for both sexes. Structure this with your partner so that it fits into your day. Even if you start with 15, that’s a step in the right direction. Maybe once the kids have gone to sleep or while they’re watching a movie. Take this time to talk to each other about your day or your thoughts and really give each other some attention. Work, your kids, and everything else can wait for that small part of your day. Establishing that connection every day will keep your relationship strong, even in the midst of your hectic lives.
- **Acknowledge each other.** Get into the habit of acknowledging your partner for the big and the little things. For example, “Thank you so much for picking up Brandon from camp yesterday. That really freed up my time to get some work done.” Or “I love it when you give me a kiss like that when I come home every day. It reminds me of how much I love and appreciate you.” We all love compliments, but acknowledgements are different in that they express appreciation for something very specific. A compliment is something like “I like your dress.” Acknowledgements are more like the examples above. They leave the recipient feeling loved and appreciated for something they did or are doing, which is a vital part of any relationship.
- **Do a project together.** One way to improve the quality of your relationship, and to spend more time together, is to create a project that you and your partner can do together. My clients have created projects ranging from taking acting classes

and then taking part in a show together to hosting themed parties in their home to taking salsa lessons and later, a trip to South America. Whatever you do, be sure that it is something you will enjoy doing together. Design it around what you both love doing. If it feels forced or one of you does not really want to be doing it in the first place, the entire purpose of the project (deepening your relationship) will be in jeopardy. The project can be as big or as small as your time-allowance, budget, and desires allow, but don't give up on the idea just because one or more of these is in short supply. Try it out; work something around your needs and preferences. You'll find that having something greater (or different) than your relationship to focus on together will bring you closer together.

- **Schedule date-nights.** You may have heard this before, but have you done it? Every couple I've worked with that has made a weekly or bi-weekly date-night with each other has grown closer and had a more balanced relationship. Having an evening or an hour every week or two that you devote completely to one another is crucial to ensuring that your partner feels loved and appreciated, and you do too. It also creates a sense of routine in our often ever-changing chaotic schedules that will be good for both of you. Switch off planning the dates so that you can surprise each other, and for one hour, or one evening, forget about the past, the future, and the rest of the world. This is your time to fall in love all over again.