

Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction

Matthew Kelly

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Introduction

Finding the perfect work-life balance has been one of the greatest dilemmas in corporate culture for several years. This book is very useful for anyone wishing to explore personal satisfaction in the context of work-life balance and understanding what constitutes a healthy work environment. The book starts by introducing readers to the dilemma. In the subsequent chapters, it proceeds to explore the meaning of satisfaction.

This book is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 explores the best way to live the life we really want, and it outlines the cost of the choices we make. This chapter goes in depth to focus on dissatisfaction to pinpoint possible problems and prescribe positive solutions. Kelly does this by offering a set of three unique principles to help readers become better versions of themselves.

Chapter 2 seeks to explore the question, “How satisfied are you?”. The author outlines satisfaction both personally and professionally. This chapter uses an array of categories to allow the readers to self-assess their personal satisfaction.

Chapter 3 answers the question, “Can you have it all?”. This chapter explores what it takes to have it all and gives scenarios to explain the complexities of life’s ongoing choices.

Chapter 4, “Batteries included”, stresses the importance of time management and presents the readers with four energy levels while illustrating the importance of investing personal time for prolonged satisfaction.

Chapter 5 discusses the systems that drive behaviors. This is an important chapter because it teaches the readers to differentiate good systems from bad ones. Depending on the readers’ behavior, the author suggests that one changes one’s system to achieve the quality of life one desires.

Book synopsis

From a practical perspective, this book is geared toward working professionals who are looking for a proper balance between their work and personal lives.

The opening chapter starts with the scenario of a fisherman, which aims to help the readers get in touch with their dissatisfaction. It then proceeds to ask the question, “What is the best way to live?”. This chapter explores the three philosophies of our age, followed by three detailed principles that give the readers a way to achieve the best versions of their current self. The philosophies include:

- (1) *Individualism*: “What’s in it for me?”
- (2) *Hedonism*: “If it feels good, do it.”
- (3) *Minimalism*: “What is the least I can do?”

Kelly posts a random list of items related to the “best way to live” recovered from the [Bestuff.com](#) site. Kelly does assert that the list lacks a comprehensive strategy. He believes that most people in the workforce lack the skills to work strategically. He further contends that the best way to live is the same for all of us and lists three common principles:

- (1) *First principle*: We are here to become a better version of ourselves.
- (2) *Second principle*: Virtue is the best way to live.
- (3) *Third principle*: Self-control.

He challenges the readers to find the best way to live by first finding a better way to live.

Chapter 2, “How satisfied are you?”, is an even more detailed chapter that self-assesses the readers’ level of satisfaction. It includes a 20-question assessment sheet that aims to give the readers personal insight on their satisfaction level. Disposition, interest, purpose, overall energy and the future are some of the items that the readers are asked to assess. Kelly challenges the readers to decide on whether they should choose balance or satisfaction.

Chapter 3 addresses the question, “Can you have it all?”. This question is highly contextual and depends on what an individual wants and values. This chapter urges the readers to search for priorities that ultimately make the seeker satisfied. Setting realistic goals is the theme of this chapter.

Chapter 4, “Batteries included”, really delves deep into understanding one’s own capacity to achieve what one wants. Kelly stresses that energy is the driver of motivation. This chapter also urges the readers to analyze their current environment to see what affects their energy levels and how they should maximize that energy.

Chapter 5, “Systems drive behaviors”, reiterates what the other chapters state. The readers should analyze their personal drive system or systems to determine what motivates their personal behaviors.

By using a combination of scenarios, questions, philosophies and principles, Kelly makes a noble effort in helping his readers achieve satisfaction.

Evaluation

Off Balance by Matthew Kelly gives the readers a realistic overview of what it means to be satisfied, both professionally and personally. The author uses a series of scenarios, along with philosophies and principles, to give readers a vivid picture of how our choices shape our future. In the workforce, the author suggests that individuals should seek satisfaction instead of balance because satisfaction is a personal journey.

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The book is written in a very casual tone with a reflective theme using scenarios to explain concepts. This tactic works very well in getting the author's perspective across, and it makes the book very personable. Kelly goes even further by adding weekly prescriptions to help the readers keep on tasks to reach their goals. However, some of the author's recommendations could be considered too idealistic considering the ever-changing climate of corporate culture. Some other negatives include the absence of an index or footnotes to support the author's recommendations. However, it could be used as a motivational tool.

Overall, the book is an easy read for readers who want to find satisfaction in their professional and personal life.

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