

Balance: How to Turn the “Act” Into “Action”

by Trina Kenyon

Tick, tick, tick is all my ears can hear. Tock, tock, tock is all my brain can digest. “Come on, let’s go!” I bellow out to my kids in a panicked voice. I look at my watch, then my car, then my watch again. It’s 7:00 a.m. and lunches for the day still have not been made and my kids haven’t made it to the car yet. I think to myself, “I can still make it.” After all, according to my super sleuth synchronized watch, I’ve got three minutes and forty-seven seconds before we have to be out of the door. I then further proceed to think, “I just need to slap a few sandwiches together and by then my kids will hopefully be loaded into the car with their seat belts on.”

Needless to say, sandwiches end up not getting made and my children do not make it to the car in time as I was hoping. Instead, we run out of the door fifteen minutes later than planned, shoes are on, but not tied, and as a final morning shocker, my oldest son tells me he left his backpack inside the house.

By now, my heart rate has increased, my mind is working on double overtime and I’m mindlessly muttering things to myself such as: “If I just had five more minutes this morning!” and “I wish there were two of me!” “Calgon . . . take me away!!”

After all the hustle and bustle of the morning, I finally get my kids to school and then start my forty-five minute commute to work for the day. I then take a deep breath and think, “What just happened? My morning was supposed to be magical. Instead it became monstrous!”

A musical group by the name of O.A.R. sings a song titled, “Shattered.” The first words of that song read:

*“In a way, I need a change
from this burnt out scene.
Another time, another town,
another everything.”*

Those words pierce my ears because I have felt them many times before. I have felt burnt out and just wanted to start over with

something. For example, I wish I could have started my morning over. Or, I wish I could have started a certain conversation over. I wish this and I wish that. The list could go on and on. I know many of you have felt the same way.

So, what do we do? How do we have better mornings? How do we create less clutter and chaos for ourselves? How do we bring balance into our lives? Balance can be better achieved using three simple concepts:

1. Slow Down.

It’s no surprise that technology drives this world. We can visit our favorite online retailer, have a conversation with a family member via video chat, and watch the newest movie with our mobile phone. We have made ourselves accessible twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Being on the go so much makes it harder to slow down. However, slowing down is vital to achieving balance.

Choose one day of the week, the same day each week, wherein you sit down by yourself with a pen and paper and write. You can write whatever you choose. I like to sit down every Sunday night and reflect on the prior week. I think about the things that went well and not so well; the things that made me smile and the things that provided conflict for me.

Then, I put all of those thoughts on paper. Once I’m done writing about the prior week I had, I review and read what I wrote. This is where the easy part comes in. Using my pen, I cross out the things from the prior week that wasted my time. For example, if I went to the grocery store without a list and

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ended up spending an extra hour there, I cross that out on my list. Or, if I waited until the last hour to finish a project that I knew I should have started on days before, I would cross that out on my list. Finally, I would make a new list of goals for the upcoming week. For this list, I would focus putting things on it that helped me from the week before and vice versa.

2. Evaluate.

This can be as broad or specific as you wish. This, after all, is your life. Evaluate your life as a whole or evaluate a certain situation. I find it helpful to evaluate my career as a paralegal every three months. I look back at the previous three months and decide if I am more or less productive. Why or why not? Am I completing work at an acceptable pace for myself? For the attorney I work for? Am I contributing to the greater whole of my team or am I focusing too much on my individual needs? Am I proposing solutions to any problems or am I the one creating the problem?

You are able to gain a lot of insight about a situation just by asking yourself a few simple questions. It is best to do this when you are alone because you will be more honest with your answers. The great thing about evaluating something is that you can do it as many times as you need to. If you have a tough question to answer or dilemma to solve, you could choose to evaluate the pros of that question or dilemma one night and then evaluate the cons the next night. If you don't have a lot of time to evaluate your question or dilemma, you could choose to evaluate one side of your issue for thirty minutes and then the other side of the issue for the following thirty minutes. This equals a total time period of one hour – simple and easy. It is always good to break up a whole into its parts to find the answers you are seeking.

3. Act.

Now that you have slowed down a little bit and taken some time to evaluate an issue or situation in your life, it is time to act. You have done the work. You have done the homework. You are ready. Everything you have written down and pondered upon, can now be put into plan.

Go back to my story of my chaotic morning. Remember how I was fighting the clock to get my kids ready and out of the door for school and lunches still hadn't been made? Well, I sat down one Sunday night, thought about that morning and made a list of things that went well and not so well about that morning.

I asked myself what I could have done differently to make that

morning run smoother. One of my solutions was to wake up fifteen minutes earlier. That simple decision put time on my side. I had extra time to solve any potential problems. Best of all, I had time to enjoy the morning and spend a little bit more time with my kids. Who doesn't love the gift of time?

Another solution I thought of was to make lunches the night before. Then, instead of thinking about what we each wanted for lunch, having to pull everything out and then having to put everything away in the morning, all we had to do was open the fridge and grab our lunch. Bing! Just like that, problem solved. The kids are happier. I am happier. I would even go as far to say I am feeling euphoric. Making those two small changes leaves me feeling in control and balanced. Balance from my morning now feeds off onto the rest of my day. One good action inspired another.

It's easy to get caught up in life. Because of this, we often end up creating a majority of the problems for ourselves that we complain about. Remember that it is easy to create a solution for each challenging thing in our lives. Use the three concepts I just discussed. Hopefully, before you know it, you'll be running like a well-oiled machine.

Seeking Nominations for Paralegal of the Year

The Paralegal of the Year Award, presented by the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar and the Utah Paralegal Association, is the top award to recognize individuals who have shown excellence as a paralegal. This award recognizes this achievement. We invite you to submit nominations of those individuals who have met this standard. Please consider taking the time to recognize an outstanding paralegal. Nominating a paralegal is the perfect way to ensure that their hard work is recognized not only by their organization but by the legal community. This will be their opportunity to shine. Nomination forms and additional information will be coming and posted at <http://www.utahbar.org/sections/paralegals/>.

The deadline for nominations is April 2013. Reminders will also come via E-bulletin as well as announcements at the Utah State Bar Mid-Year Meeting in March in St. George. The award will be presented at the Paralegal Day luncheon held in May 2013.