



balance



e q u a l s

# happiness

Are you satisfied with your life or do you find yourself day-dreaming about things you would rather be doing? Do you feel you have a good balance between your spouse, children, career, finances and friends? Do you still have time for yourself? How do you find the right balancing act to strengthen your family, nurture yourself and achieve your personal goals?

By Karen Olesch-Williams



**T**hree years ago, as a relatively new mother with a 2-year-old and in the early stages of a second pregnancy, I was struggling to find my place as a parent, a wife and a career woman. Goals, which had been important to me in my youth, were completely changed with marriage and children, and I was finding it difficult to balance all that was important to me. Desperate to find resolution, I started a goal journal.

Several months prior I attended a seminar through work called "Leading from Within." The class spoke of six areas to explore within your own personal life in order to become a leader — family/relationships, home, career, finances, self and spirituality. These six topics became the beginning of my journey into goal journaling. I addressed each of these topics individually until I had a complete picture of how I wanted to spend the rest of my life. For the past three years, I have used my goal journal to help me stay on track and stay focused on my needs and wants. It has helped me to define my life, and it has helped me through difficult times and challenging decisions. Keeping a goal journal can help you to lead a challenging, balanced, and happy life.

## Getting Started

Once you have selected a journal for your goals, take a few minutes to free-write why you feel the need to keep a goal journal at this point in your life. Is it to attain more balance in your life or help you make a decision about your career? These few pages will get your brain moving and thinking about your goals. At the top of every other page or every two pages record the aforementioned six topics: family/relationships, home, career, finances, self and spirituality. In each category make a list of short- and long-term goals.

## Self/Personal Goals

Personal goals can take many forms. These goals may be educational or things you want to learn to do: taking a cooking class, learning to sail a boat or going back to school to finish your degree. They can be relaxing and fun; for example, taking a weekend retreat alone or reading one book per month. Personal goals can involve your family, like cycling through Australia together or taking the family out to your favorite restaurant. Remember, even though these goals can include your family, the focus should remain around you and what you enjoy doing. If you are having trouble focusing on just yourself, picture yourself in your '90s reflecting back on your life. Do you have any regrets? What do you wish you would have done? Record goals that are larger than life. This

is how you want to spend your life so do not let money or others restrain you from writing down what you really want to do. Get creative. Be bold!

## Family/Relationships

The family category is three-fold. Here is an example of how your family pages might look:

**Spouse/Partner:** Get a sitter and spend time alone with spouse every few weeks. Maybe dinner and a movie. Take a weekend retreat alone once a year. Treat him (or her) to a sensual massage.

**Children:** Set aside time each day to talk to my kids about what is important to them. Spend one day a week doing something special with each of them alone.

**Friends:** Meet for coffee once a month. Start a book club or dinner club. Seek out new relationships.

## Career/Work

Before starting your goal list for this section, ask yourself this question: "Do I have a career I am satisfied with or am I working just to pay the bills?" Your answer to this question will shape the way you approach your goals. If you are working just to pay the bills, make a "if money were no object I would..." or "if I could do anything I wanted as a career, it would be..." list. Maybe you would like to run your own business and have a great idea for a product or service. This is your dream life. Picture yourself already living it. The next and hardest list you will make will be a step-by-step outline of how to stop working to pay the bills and start pursuing your dream. Don't do anything to put yourself in financial jeopardy. Maybe you can work two nights a week and save money to start your own business (it may take 10 years, but you are working toward your goal!)

If you already have a satisfying career you are off to a great start. Your goals might be to climb the ladder, to reduce cycle time within your company or to

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attend seminars to keep your skills fresh.

### Home

Home is a pretty broad category and can include anything from painting the bathroom to creating a room for yourself or spending more time cleaning. Some questions to prompt responses in this category are: "Do I like my home, is there room for me in it? Are there repairs that need to be accomplished? Is a clutter free home important to me? What do my spouse/partner and children contribute to the well being of the home? What do I contribute?" As we did with the family section, divide this section into categories—home repairs, cleaning and clutter, creating a better environment or a warm and inviting living space. List a few goals in each section.

### Finances

Are you struggling from day to day? If so, you might want to spend some extra time in this area. Talk to financial planners, debt consolidators or read some books on how to manage your money. Create a complete outline and timeline on how you will get out of debt. Getting out of debt can be difficult; consequently, the first year may be trying to stick to a budget or thinking of ideas on how to have a little extra money to send to creditors. If your finances look good, start making some long term goals like saving for college, your retirement or a family trip. This is also the place to make a budget for the more expensive goals.

### Spirituality

Spirituality goals can be tremendously powerful and life changing, so plan these goals carefully. If you are practicing a specific religion, these goals may include making time for church, worship, or prayer every day. If you are not sure what you believe in, maybe this is a good time to find out; consider keeping a separate journal on your spiritual search. If religion is not a part of your life, you

can still define your own spiritual goals. Would you like to work on meditation or relaxation? Educate yourself about spirituality or philosophy in general? Spiritual goals can be spending two weeks alone hiking through the Rockies, or planning your funeral and creating a living will.

### Incorporating Goals Into Your Lifestyle

Now that your goal lists are complete, it is time to create a goal time line. Put short-term goals (two years and under) at the top of one page and long-term goals (over two years) at the top of a second page in your journal. Start with your self/personal goal list and transfer each goal over to either the short-term or long-term list. After you have finished with the self/personal goals, systematically go through each of the six categories until all your goals are either on the short-term or long-term list.

Next, for your short-term goal list choose a date (month and year only) that you want to have accomplished this goal and write the date next to the goal. On the long-term list record a year only next to the goal. Finally, take the goals that you want to accomplish over the next six months and set aside time in your day-planner to work on those goals. You can work on several goals at once with creative planning and time management. Julie Morgenstern outlines

how to fit all of these categories into your life in her book *Time Management from the Inside Out* (Henry Holt).

The most important part of a goal journal is to constantly revisit it and add and subtract goals as your life, wants and needs change. Look at your goal journal once a month to see how you are doing. Have you accomplished any of your goals? Check the dates: do you need more time for any of them? Which goals should you start scheduling time for? Finally, record your accomplishments on a "goals achieved" page. You'll be on your way to a balanced, happy life. ~

