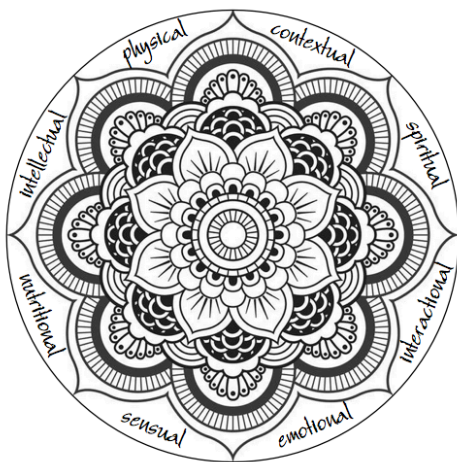


Are you fully in balance?

You may have heard me make reference to one of my heroes, Virginia Satir, in the past. Many of her writings speak to me, yet for now I'd like to focus on one main topic, self care. Satir relates our sense of "self" as having multiple components, each of which balance the other, for us to be at our best--physically, spiritually, and mentally. She relates these sections to a mandala, historically drawn as a wheel. For the wheel to rotate, allowing us to move forward through life, no area must get neglected or the wheel becomes flat and we get stuck. The mandala below I've taken a bit of creative liberty with. Notice that the edge of it is round, as a wheel, but the inner workings are more intricate, each piece beautiful, more in tune with what I view each of our inner selves and the components that make us who we are.



Let's take a look at each of the sections:

Contextual--this relates to your surroundings; your environment including your time, the air, the colors around you, the temperature, even your financial life.

In your contextual world, do you feel at peace? Is your home environment comfortable? Could you do something to make it a bit more special? Fresh fall flowers

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Autumn: A Time of Letting Go

As I reflect on my summer, and on what the next 3 months will bring, I want to move through the last quarter of the year peacefully. There are changes that always come in the fall; although schedules get back to normal in September with all back in school it is quickly followed by holiday time and the schedule that gets even busier than normal. And yet autumn is my favorite time of year, by far. I enjoy the hope of spring, the relaxation of summer, the meditation and new beginnings of winter. But fall is when my heart and being are calmest, the feel of the season flows deeply in my being, and the smells, sounds, and sights are most meaningful and enjoyable to me. Fall is home, it's family, it's love. Spiritually it's a time of balancing light and dark, letting go, and deeper understanding that nothing is permanent. Think about nature: we are moving to more balance between sun and darkness, the leaves are falling from the trees, and we learn that even what we enjoy in the summer flowers and play must end as we move forward.

As we face the changes in the season (granted, more slowly in Arizona), it's a time to take stock. What are you holding onto that might be better let go of in your life? In speaking of letting go recently with someone I noted that we often think of it as a one-time action, like letting go of a balloon. While letting go is actually more of a process when it comes to the psychological and spiritual realms. When a loved one dies, for example, there are twists and turns in letting go of the person as they were here, and adjusting our life patterns accordingly. Or when we leave a



career, it's an action of walking out the door the last time, but we still must integrate into our lives the new career or job or retirement. There is more than the one moment in time.

What are you in the process of letting go of? How are you being asked to recognize the impermanence of something in life? Where is balance off in your life? Here's a simple journaling exercise to do around this topic:

1. Consider and write down your answers to the above questions. Or, if writing isn't your thing, draw a picture to represent it.
2. Include in your writing, or picture, words and colors and shapes to represent how you feel about this change or loss.
3. Next, write or draw a picture to represent the ways in which this release might be beneficial to you.
4. Find an object to represent this change you are moving through, this period or experience or person or whatever it is that you must let go of in your life.
5. Finally, put this object in a meaningful place to remind you of the letting go you are in the process of. Let this encourage you to allow this to happen a moment at a time, a day at a time.

It takes time for a leaf to fall, allow yourself time to let go of the leaf in your life.

I believe if we face this fall with such action, and using our spiritual resources to encourage and help us to take the steps needed in letting go, we will reach winter in December and be ready for the new beginnings of January. Don't rush this fall. Inhale the pumpkin and cinnamon smells, enjoy the early morning or evening walks that are a little cooler, decorate a part of your home with fall leaves, pumpkins, or corn husks, and spend some time each day breathing in the depth and wisdom in the letting go. And as you do so, remember:

Autumn . . . makes a double demand.

It asks that we prepare for the future—that we be wise in the ways of garnering and keeping.

But it also asks that we learn to let go—to acknowledge the beauty of sparseness.

by Bonaro Overstreet

September is:

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Month

We might think of veterans when we hear this, but TBI's occur very often due to automobile accidents, sports injuries, falls, and other everyday occurrences. Since we've written about this before we're sharing suggestions this time about what NOT to say when we learn a person has a TBI (which is just as important as what we DO say):

"Gee, you seem fine to me!" -- Quite often the injuries are invisible and saying this truly isn't encouraging to most people, rather it minimizes the damage they have and are experiencing.

"How many times do I have to repeat myself?" -- Memory difficulty is one of the primary problems following TBI, try to remember this and be generous in reminders and repetitions.

"I can do that for you." -- People need to be empowered to do what they can; most will ask for help with what they do need. If you want to help, ask instead: "What can I do to assist you?" or "Is there something I can do that would be helpful?"

"You're so lucky to be alive." -- The person likely realizes this; but on some days they may not feel this way as they have so much to accommodate to now. Better to say, "I'm so lucky to spend time with you today."

"You have to be positive!" -- The individual often has a mood disorder related to the injury, and fights to be positive quite often. If you can, empathize, "I can only imagine how difficult all the changes are".

"You're not trying hard enough." -- Remember the old adage, "Until you've walked a mile in my moccasins, please don't judge me". (based on Bellaruth Naparstak's blog and my clinical experience).

If you're a caregiver of someone with a TBI, be sure to read our article on balancing life - this may be more difficult for you. And if you're a survivor of a TBI, take a look at Satir's mandala wheel and see what you might be missing most in your life. See if you can't add just one experience in your weakest area this week.

Are you fully in balance? (Cont.)

or a scented candle? A new warm throw to welcome the winter and ward off the chill? Head outside to a beautiful park, an art gallery, whatever will inspire YOU.

Spiritual--your soul.

What feeds you on a spiritual level? Are you religious? If so, involve yourself in your church community--attend services but also reach beyond to feel a greater part of a smaller group. Attend bible study. Join a social group. Volunteer. If you're not religious, begin a repetitive ritual to practice. Clear your mind, practice meditation, yoga, pilates. Focus on your breath. Be in the moment.

Interactional--your relationships.

Are you a socializer? We have talked in the past about how to beat depression and countless studies that show interacting with others is key to warding off the blues. Call together some friends, no fancy dinners necessary--fall is here. Plan a s'mores night! Fire up the outdoor fireplace or grill as our night time temps cool off or try the recipe in this month's newsletter for an oven made s'mores dip. No cooking ability required!

Emotional--your feelings.

What makes you happiest? Spending time with family or friends? A hobby? Going to a movie? Make time for what makes YOU feel good. Taking time for yourself shouldn't be viewed as a luxury, it is a must. You can't be all you need to be if you quit caring for yourself.

Sensual--your senses.

Pay attention to each of your five senses and nourish them. Memories are tightly entwined with our senses--a whiff of an apple pie may take you to your mother's kitchen, a song may take you to the best of times with friends. Use those senses to invite in some comfort and happiness.

Sight- If you don't look out onto a view that inspires you, place a picture in easy view that you of a scene or those you love.

Smell- Light a candle, bake some bread or cookies, spritz your favorite perfume or cologne (or that of your loved one!)

Taste- Is chocolate your thing? Spicy foods? Salty snacks? Indulge yourself, but limit your intake if it is a treat that can lead you to overeating and feelings of despair over loss of control. Try portion control with pre-packaged sizes, this time of year if candy

is your taste treat, you'll find the grocery aisles lined with individually sized sweets, pretzels, popcorn bags.

Sound- The ocean is the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of peace. The crash of the waves is a sound I can conjure up anywhere I am if I need to alleviate stress. If music is your favorite, put together a playlist of your favorite songs.

Touch- Do one thing to enliven your sense of touch. A soft scarf to wrap around your neck as the chill lifts the air. A new pillowcase, silky and cool on your cheek as you fall asleep. A comfortable pair of shoes to soften your step for walks this fall.

Nutritional--what you take in (food, drug, drink).

Examine your diet and keep in mind, "what goes up must come down". Are you ingesting caffeine and sugar to get you through your days? The short-term relief of these stimulants often has more detrimental effects in the long-term. Sleep can be affected as your circadian rhythms become out of whack. Eating lots of processed foods? Feeling sluggish with a belly filled with heavily refined foods? Try your own variety of cleanse. This can be as simple as beginning to eliminate just one food, drug, drink you've been consuming and replacing it with a healthier substitute. Drink diet soda? Try swapping that for a glass of iced tea. Eat fast food burgers? Try ordering grilled chicken sandwiches instead. You get the idea. Make just one change to start, notice the difference in how you feel, and chart your progress!

Intellectual--your thoughts.

Entertain your mind. Intrigue and challenge yourself. Read or listen to a book or podcast on a topic you'd like to learn more about. Do a puzzle book. Take a class at the community college. Learn a new skill--knitting, cake-decorating, flower arranging, welding, woodworking--the list is endless.

Physical--your body.

Physical activity can be a wide range of things, from working out in a gym to gardening in your flowerbed. Are you active? Sign up for your first 5K. (Did you know that most 5Ks are open to walkers as well as runners?) Join a gym, cultivate a garden, do yoga. Whatever suits your style, as Nike says, Just Do It.

Balance your life, make certain that beautiful mandala is a vibrant rainbow of color with all areas alive. With balance, your wheel will freely move you from one stage of life to the next.

September is:

National Suicide Prevention month

Know the myths about suicide so that if you are faced with a friend, family member, or yourself having those thoughts you know there is help available and reach out for it. In the Phoenix area call 602-222-9444.

"People who talk about suicide won't really do it." Not True. Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "you'll be sorry when I'm dead," "I can't see any way out," -- no matter how casually or jokingly said, may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

"Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy." Not True. Most suicidal people are not

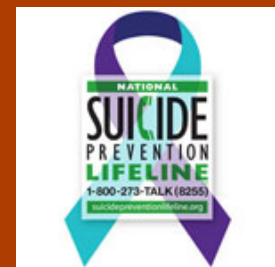
psychotic or insane. They may be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing. Extreme distress and emotional pain are always signs of mental illness but are not signs of psychosis.

"People who commit suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help." Not True. Studies of adult suicide victims have shown that more than half had sought medical help within six months before their deaths and a majority had seen a medical professional within 1 month of their death.

"Talking about suicide may give someone the idea." Not True. You don't give a suicidal person ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true -- bringing up the subject of suicide and

discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

Article reprinted from SAVE, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, for more information online, visit: www.save.org





Ultimate S'mores Dip

The perfect sweet and salty treat!

Ingredients:

- 1c assorted chocolate candies
- about 15 marshmallows
- graham crackers
- pretzels

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 450 F. Spread out assorted chocolate candies (I suggest Rolos, Reese's Cups, or mini candy bars) in the bottom of the 6-inch skillet or pan you are using. Top with marshmallows and bake for 5-7 minutes until marshmallows are toasted and chocolate has melted. Dip with graham crackers and pretzels. Enjoy!

Adapted from:

www.sprinkledwithjules.com

To note:

Brain injury statistics among the population of football players in America are quite alarming. According to a recent segment on PBS, 87 of 91 former NFL players tested positive for a brain disorder known as Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy or CTE. That statistic translates to 96% of all examined players being positive for CTE, or 79% of all NFL players in the U.S. Upon autopsy, it has been found that 131 of the 165 football playing subjects studied tested positively for this brain disease. Those studied were a combination of individuals who played professionally, semi-professionally, college, or high school football. These results were from one of the largest studies thus far, the one at Boston University. If you play, know someone or have a child who plays football, check out the links below.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/concussion-watch/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/index.html>



Resources:

[Traumatic Brain Injury Guided Meditation](#)

by Bellaruth Naparstak,

[Playing It by Heart: Taking Care of Yourself No Matter What](#)

by Melody Beattie

[Breathing: The Master Key to Self Healing \(Self Healing Ser.\)](#) Audio CD

by Andrew Weil



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Did you know I have a website?

www.thewholenessinstitute.com

And a blog...

<https://thewholenessinstitute.wordpress.com/>

I am also on social media!

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/BethSikoraPhd>

Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.com/bethsikora/>

Instagram:

account name: thewholenessinstitute

Google+

[https://plus.google.com/](https://plus.google.com/112460066306008133466/posts)

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