



# Creating a Healthy Balanced Life

Unique facilitator reproducible  
activities and handouts

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Unique Facilitator Reproducible Activities and Handouts

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# Creating a Healthy Balanced Life

## Unique facilitator reproducible activities and handouts

*This book is dedicated to each other and our deep and caring friendship — a bond between two women that began in 1989 and over the last 20 years has grown with honor and admiration.*

— Sandra Negley and Ester Leutenberg

Our special thanks to:

Husband — Bob Negley

Granddaughter — Eleanor Negley

. . . who is my balance

Husband — Jay Leutenberg

Daughter — Amy Brodsky, LISW-S

Daughter — Kathy Khalsa, MAJS, OTR/L

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*There are two journeys one must make to have life balance —  
out there and in here. One depends on the other.*

*Every exit is an entrance. The door swings both ways.*

*The only way out is always in.*

*To move on in the world as it is, one must turn to resources within.*

— Robert Fulghum

# Creating a Healthy Balanced Life

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## Notes to the Facilitator

### Introduction

Living a healthy, balanced life is a process that happens moment-to-moment, day-to-day, and is filled with surprises and challenges. It is not something that can be placed on a scale and then equally divided between our relationships, work, recreation and self. Our daily choices guide us in balancing our lives. When we become more present in our daily thoughts and actions we can create a healthier, more harmonious balance, and take personal control of our lives.

The ultimate goal of this book, *Creating a Healthy Balanced Life*, is to provide the therapist, group facilitator or lay leader ideas and resources for facilitating individual or group sessions on living a healthy balanced life. We have approached the subject with the understanding that every individual has a personal definition of health and balance, as well as a picture of what a healthy balanced life might look like. Using current literature, personal clinical practice, life-experiences and a combined total of 125+ years of striving for a healthy balanced life ourselves, we designed this book as a framework for presenting key topics to help enhance the quality of life for others.

### The Five Chapters

**1) The Mind . Body . Soul** — Balancing life begins and ends with the *self*. When an understanding of what lies within is established, a person can make choices and take action toward a healthier more balanced way of living.

**2) Attitude** — Approaching life with a positive attitude allows us to be open to what each day brings and to acknowledge our many blessings. Living a healthy balanced life becomes a natural process when we approach each day with optimism and excitement.

**3) Stress-less** — Stress is a part of everyone's life. The goal to a healthy balanced life is not to eliminate stress, but to learn how to manage it by developing coping skills, simplifying, and creating an awareness of our responses to the world around us.

**4) Relationships** — Surrounding ourselves with people who help us make meaning out of our talents and strengths, and who support us in sharing who we are in the world are critically important in living a healthy balanced life.

**5) Leisure / Recreation / Play** — In order to stay healthy and balanced there has to be an outlet, a release for the mind and body. Through recreation and play this release can be witnessed by tears of laughter, exhaustion from physical movement or silence to focus the mind.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction, which sets the tone for the section. As the facilitator, you may find this strictly informational, or you may wish to use it as a way of introducing your participants to the topic. On the reverse side of each chapter introduction, you will find the Chapter Guide, which is a quick reference to the exercises. It also includes simple tips and ideas to enhance facilitation.

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Notes to the Facilitator *(Continued)*

## The Chapter Guide

**Title** — Name of the exercise

Each exercise has a front and back page that addresses the same concept. Some are intended to be used together and will have the same title. The others can be used together or each of the pages can be stand alone exercises. These will have separate titles.

**Tips** — Additional ideas or suggestions not listed on individual pages

**Page Number** — The page number(s)

**Key** — At the bottom of each guide is a key:

**F** = follow-up or homework

**P** = prepare prior to facilitation

**R** = reproducible

**S** = supplies are needed

**T** = may require more time than the traditional 60-minute session

## Eight Activity Styles

In *Creating a Healthy Balanced Life*, we have designed eight different styles of activities. These have been integrated to facilitate exploration of a multiplicity of concepts within each chapter's topic:

**1) Worksheets**

**2) Cards**

**3) Checklists**

**4) Creative expression**

**5) Journaling**

**6) Meditation**

**7) Quotations**

**8) Sentence starters**

These styles were carefully selected for a variety of reasons:

- To engage participants through a diversity of learning styles — visual, verbal-linguistic and logical.
- To design exercises that could be implemented with an individual or in a group. Some people prefer a more solitary environment, but others prefer a group and more interactive environment.
  - Each of the techniques we suggest will be a means to independent personal exploration.
  - Using all of the exercises within each chapter, participants will develop a more global understanding of the topic as well as an opportunity to enhance their learning styles.

**1) Activity worksheets** use a combination of styles to engage the participant in the learning process. Some exercises will combine creative expression and journal writing, while others will have a more didactic approach. Many of the activity worksheets lend themselves to follow-up or homework assignments.

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Notes to the Facilitator *(Continued)*

**2) Cards**, one of the most versatile approaches to group work, are also an innovative approach to one-on-one sessions. Copy the cards onto cardstock quality paper, cut out the cards, and if possible, laminate.

### **Suggested Card Activities:**

- Place cards face up on a flat surface. Ask each participant to select a card that most relates to a personal situation and discuss why each card was selected. If two people would like the same card, seat them together.
- Place cards face down on a flat surface, or circulate deck, asking participants to each select a card at random. Ask participants how the cards relate to them at this time or at some time in the past. If a person cannot think of any connection, you may want to allow that person to select another card.
- Use the cards in conjunction with journaling pages or as a separate journaling exercise within that chapter.
- Use the blank page of cards in the Leisure Chapter, page \_\_\_\_, to add to each set of cards or to create your own set of cards.

**3) Checklists** can create an awareness of current practices as well as stimulate new ideas similar to sentence starters. (See number 8 on page \_\_.) Some checklists can easily be converted into cards or used in conjunction with a creative expression exercise, activity worksheet or journal page.

**4) Creative expression** exercises will require additional supplies, outlined on the Chapter Guide. Additional time outside a traditional 60-minute session will be needed to complete some of these projects. This can be accomplished by extending the session, completing it during a second session or assigning some of the experience as homework. Experiential facilitation can enhance the session and assist those individuals who find it difficult to share thoughts and feelings through more conventional therapy approaches.

**5) Journaling** reinforces each chapter topic and introduces this practice for long-term use. A variety of methods has been selected for journal pages. Some pages are designed for free-flow writing while others are more guided with specific questions and directed writing.

### **Suggested Journaling Activities:**

- For pages with suggested words at the bottom, you may want to review all words to ensure that participants understand the meaning of each word. Support participants by asking questions prior to assigning writing.
- Encourage participants to add their own words on the blank lines.
- Encourage participants to not limit their writing to the space provided. Distribute additional sheets of paper or invite them to use personal journals.

**6) Meditations** are introduced to engage the more auditory learners. They are also used to encourage the practice of taking time to slow down, focus, let go and be present in the moment. Meditations can be incredibly powerful but must be used with caution and practice. Keep in mind that for some people it is uncomfortable to close their eyes. Always allow the option for individuals to participate with their eyes open and encourage them to participate at the level on which they are most comfortable.

*(Continued on the next page)*

# Notes to the Facilitator *(Continued)*

Deep rhythmic breathing requires practice. Before beginning a meditation experience, practice the breathing exercise so that all participants clearly understand and feel comfortable. The breathing part of the meditation is essential in gaining the full benefit from the experience as well as being able to meditate independently.

- 7) Quotations** are provided to motivate or validate participants' thoughts or actions. These quotation pages can be used as a worksheet or the quotes can be cut into individual strips and used in ways similar to those suggested for cards. Specific quotes can be used as journal starters or included on one of the thank-you cards in the Relationship Chapter, page \_\_\_\_\_. As a facilitator you may wish to continue collecting quotes and add to those provided on the quotation pages. Making a set of quotation cards is also a unique facilitation technique, one which interweaves techniques and multiple learning styles.
- 8) Sentence starters** are excellent for breaking down topics, generating discussion, and initiating new ideas. Encourage participants to not limit their writing to space provided and offer additional paper or encourage the use of a personal journal. A fun way to open or close the session is to select one sentence starter and ask participants to write what the quotation means to them. If time permits, ask for volunteers to share their responses.

## Group Facilitation

The facilitation of groups is a unique process that always requires special consideration.

**Size of group:** The larger the group, the less personal the experience, and this often limits participants' self-disclosure. It is imperative to provide an atmosphere of emotional safety. When using experiential approaches in a group setting, limit the number of participants, if possible. The increased movement of participants and use of supplies requires more room, and it can be difficult to monitor everyone's physical safety. It is always wise to have additional support staff present.

**Participants:** When facilitating a group or providing an individual treatment session, understanding the participant(s) is critical.

Ask yourself these questions:

Will the participants be able to understand the concept of the exercise?

Is there a better way to introduce the topic? There may be individuals who have experienced a traumatic event and this could trigger an unforeseen reaction?

Will I introduce this exercise if there are individuals who are unable to read, write or speak English?

What if members of the group are shy or uncomfortable answering questions? In what ways can I give them the option to pass or skip until they are ready to participate? In this situation, following up individually after the group session, reinforces that you care.

**Length of session:** Most sessions can be completed in the traditional 50 to 60 minute session. However, some experiential exercises require additional time.

*(Continued on the next page)*



# Notes to the Facilitator *(Continued)*

## **Preparation:**

- Plan ahead when using these exercises. Even seasoned therapists need time to prepare for sessions.
- It will be helpful to try the exercises before facilitating.
- Gather supplies needed. Have all of the supplies organized and ready to go in the room where the session is being held.
- Count all supplies. How many pens, pencils, scissors, etc. are being used? This assists in creating a safe environment for participants and facilitator.
- Arrange the group space. Each group can require an entirely different environment. If you desire chairs in a circle or need tables and chairs for a creative experience, have the area ready prior to group arrival.
- Read ahead for clarity and understanding. Be certain that you understand the directions and can facilitate the exercise smoothly and with ease. If you are facilitating a meditation, read the meditation numerous times so when you are reading it to the participants, you are confident and focused. This is critical for a successful meditation experience.

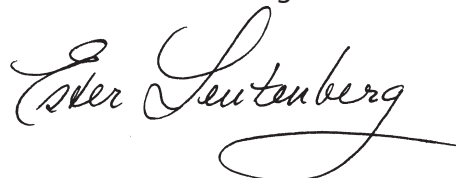
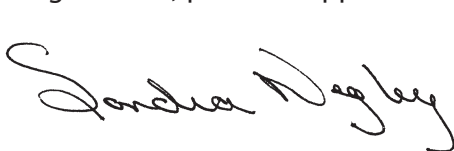
**Participant's follow-up and/or homework** can reinforce the topic and increase behavior change. If you assign homework, it is critical to follow-up on the assignment in a one-to-one session or in the following group. Encouraging people to have a personal journal will enhance the experience inside and outside of the session.

## **Sample Group Format:**

- A. Group greeting (sets a safe and comfortable environment)
- B. Participant introductions
- C. Ground rules (respect all comments, confidentiality within the group, etc.)
- D. Homework or follow-up review (if applicable)
- E. Introduction of topic
  - a. Discuss topic. You may use visual, auditory or more experiential approaches for introduction explanations, i.e., white board, flip chart, power point or initiatives.
  - b. Distribute supplies and/or handouts
- F. Facilitate group experience
- G. Process the experience (processing brings added meaning and closure to the group experience)
- H. Follow-up or homework



## **In Summary:**

This is your session; you are the facilitator! Add, delete, adapt, or create something new. A powerful experience in an individual or group session depends on the facilitator being genuine, using a warm, personal approach to the process and addressing the needs of the participants.





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# Life Purpose

Leading a balanced life requires full participation in the process, and contributions to, the world around us. This involvement facilitates a sense of belonging, self-esteem and personal power.

Finding purpose is different for every individual and often changes throughout a person's life stages. For some, their chosen career or job brings them a deep sense of purpose. Others view their jobs strictly as a place to acquire compensation and they seek meaning through family, hobbies, politics, volunteering, community service, religion, spirituality, etc.

Here is a compilation of a diverse group of people and how they define their life purpose at this stage of their life:

*"My life's purpose is to be an advocate for individuals with mental illness, since my son had a clinical depression and died by suicide." ~ E.A.L., age 74*

*"For the last 20 years, since I retired, my purpose in life is to keep my wife happy and healthy." ~ K.R., age 88*

*"My purpose is to someday make lots of money and then establish a non-profit foundation for children." ~ D.W.B., age 24*

*"My life purpose is to make a difference regarding the marginalization of women, so I work with women in increasing assertive communication skills." ~ S.N., age 55*

*"I hope to help save the planet through my conservation work." ~ R.P., age 32*

*"I want to bring kindness to everyone I meet and know." ~ P.F.F., age 14*

*"My whole purpose in life is to be sure that my children have a loving, supportive and caring family, which is very different than how I grew up." ~ M.A., age 37*

*"I make meaning in my life through my spiritual and religious practices." ~ E.M., age 49*

*"My purpose is to become a veterinarian because I love animals." ~ J.G., age 18*

*"My goal is to raise awareness of being more accepting of diversities in people, no matter their race, religion, gender identity or background." ~ A.F., age 26*

*"As a health professional, my life's work is to help people heal." ~ M.R., age 41*

*(Continued on the next page)*



# Life Purpose *(Continued)*

***Finding purpose and meaning is essential for a healthy balanced life.***

**To help you define your life purpose, complete the following statements:**

1. As a young child, I said, "When I grow up I want to \_\_\_\_\_"  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I dream about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I always thought I might \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. When I get time I want to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. I thought I could make a difference in \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. At the end of my life, I want people to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. At the end of my life, I want to be able to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. I will contribute to the greater good of society \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Today, my life purpose is** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_