

Article for Employment Today February 2010 Issue.

## Finding Balance

The holiday period for most of us is a time of relaxation and an opportunity for finding another perspective on what balance means. This perspective often causes people to question why they do the work they do and often creates some dread about going back to work.

Over my holiday I learned how to juggle – both literally and figuratively! A feat I had struggled to achieve many years ago. I was on a mission to master it when I learned that the benefits of juggling, or indeed any activity that uses both sides of the brain, increases the brain's 'grey matter' and improves connectivity in its neurological structure. My NLP teacher suggests that you can take a problem or issue you wish to resolve into a juggling session and the brain loosens its 'stuckness' enabling new possibilities and understandings while it is balancing.

From the Science Daily website <http://current.com/1n62i4c> Oct. 17, 2009 :— Research, funded by the Wellcome Trust and Medical Research Council and published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, appears to show improved connectivity in parts of the brain involved in making movements necessary to catch the balls while juggling.... Dr Heidi Johansen-Berg of the Department of Clinical Neurology, University of Oxford, who led the work, says. 'In fact we find the structure of the brain is ripe for change (as we age). We've shown that it is possible for the brain to condition its own wiring system to operate more efficiently.'

Other research has shown that Juggling improves balance, develops ambidextrousness, relieves stress and anxiety, increases grey matter and improves concentration. It also improves hand-eye coordination, motor skills and a sense of rhythm. Furthermore juggling gives a sense of accomplishment and fun.

For me juggling is a metaphor for finding balance in life and work. Balancing the many levels of external and internal activities, both conscious and unconscious; it requires self awareness and good self-management. As soon as we are off balance of course 'we drop the ball'! This idea in itself demonstrates the amount of focus we need to keep things in

balance; consciously rebalancing after times of extended extraverted activity or stressful periods, projects or events.

The topic of work/life balance has been given less priority than the importance of productivity during the recession. But in my view regardless of the measure of someone's 'hardiness' toward managing stress, achieving a balance between having sufficient work challenge and having enough space in a working day to gain perspective and reflect on the bigger questions, is important. It's not only important for work performance but it is also important for interrelationships and wellbeing in general.

From a career perspective, developing the art of juggling and thereby improving brain functioning and reducing stress and anxiety, seems to be a pretty good career development strategy. If juggling can help an individual enhance effectiveness, imagine the positive effects that juggling activities in the workplace could have on morale and performance!

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