

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Are Your Child's Life Accounts in Balance?

By David Benzel



It's the start of a new year and after the spending frenzy that usually occurs in November and December, I am acutely aware of an imbalance in my financial accounts.

If I ignore the tension and neglect to bring the categories of spending, saving, giving, earning, etc., back into balance the cost is high and can have long-term, negative repercussions.

Life accounts are similar in that they can easily get “out of whack,” and at times demand a concerted effort to regain balance.

Learning to manage all of the different areas of life is – well – a lifelong journey.

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However, teaching your children, early on, to give appropriate attention to the various categories in their life, sets them up for being responsible adults and helps them to avoid unnecessary heartache.

Easier said than done, right? But it is possible.

Here are 3 strategies that allow you to have teachable moments with your child regarding balance.

However, first, let's distinguish 8 life accounts that your child has the opportunity to grow in. This is particularly true as they come into their teen years.

Here they are, in no particular order:

- **Physical** - Taking steps to stay healthy – which includes adequate rest, eating nutritiously, and staying active.
- **Spiritual** - Growing in the knowledge and faith of your spiritual background.
- **School/learning** - Keeping up with schoolwork and pursuing lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Financial** - Starting to earn money with side jobs and learn to budget resources.
- **Sports/Recreation/Entertainment** - This may include the responsibilities that come with being an athlete, and/or anything that is done for fun (ie. going to the movies, playing video games, spending time on social media outlets, longboarding etc)
- **Family** - Quality time spent as a family, plus any household chores/responsibilities.
- **Community** - Looking outside of family and friends and trying to make a contribution to the greater good.
- **Social** - Developing strong mutual friendships.

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1) Give Them a Healthy Example to Follow

For all the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, you may remember a famous song called *Cats in the Cradle* that came out in 1974. Sung by the folk singer, Harry Chapin, it told the story of a dad recounting how busy he was as his son grew up.

Never quite getting around to spending quality time with him, he eventually realizes – after a lifetime and with a bit of regret – that his son grew up to be just like him.

The song hints at the fact that the dad did not have balance in his life. His career certainly took precedence, and so it should be no surprise that his son followed suit.

Giving your child a healthy example to follow is the **number one way you can impact her approach to balance in life.**



Kids readily take their cues from the adults around them. This includes both the good and bad that they see demonstrated. It should be no surprise that, what we deem as important, often becomes true for our children. When we allow areas of our life to get lopsided we are sending a message that is loud and clear to our kids.

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Practical Steps: Take an internal inventory of **your** various life accounts. If there are areas that are neglected, work to give them the necessary attention they require. For those accounts that get too much attention, try to bring a healthier balance to them. Remember, **how** you live your life does not only impact your day-to-day, but has a lasting influence on your children.

2) Take Action and Make a Plan When Things Get Out of Balance

There will be seasons when life accounts typically get out of balance. This is to be expected and as long as you work to bring things back to equilibrium you will not usually suffer any consequences.

Here are some examples of transitional periods that often result in imbalance:

- Summer months often have a heavy focus on social and recreational areas of life
- Starting a new job can lead to an intense focus on career/work account
- Holidays tend to focus on family and social accounts but neglect physical areas (like eating nutritiously and sleeping consistently)
- Start of school often requires more time and energy in school/learning account and less time in recreation and social accounts

There is a natural ebb and flow that is to be expected. Problems arise however when efforts are not made to “right” the imbalance.

Practical Steps: Have a **PLAN**. Just because a section of life gets disproportionate on its own does not mean that it will get back into balance naturally. It usually takes a definitive plan and a concerted effort on yours and your child’s part. Take small, doable steps to prevent a feeling of being overwhelmed and/or paralyzed.

3) Communicate the Importance of Balance with Conversation

We tell our kids daily what is important to us – whether we intend to or not. We communicate with our **example**, with our **actions**, and finally with our **words**.

Striving for balance in life needs to be talked about between parents and kids. We cannot just expect them to know what that looks like. Ideally, with regular and friendly conversation about priorities and responsibilities, addressing imbalance becomes a lot

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easier. Instead of being seen as an “enforcing of rules” (ie. too much time spent on social media) it can be a time of encouraging your child to make better use of time and energy to meet responsibilities.

Practical Steps: Have one-on-one time with your child and enlist their help in the problem-solving piece of how to restore balance to their life accounts. Be sure to provide the tools they need to maintain balance. This could include:

- A calendar and/or a planner
- Structured time on devices
- A tutor if there are school challenges
- Transportation to a job

Bringing It All Together

In regards to life-long lessons, learning to balance life accounts pays big dividends. Parents that model this healthy approach to their kids give them a leg-up on learning to appropriately handle their own responsibilities. If this is followed-up by action plans to “right” imbalances **and** regular conversation that keeps it front-and-center, children are given the tools to successfully achieve and maintain balance in all of their life accounts.

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