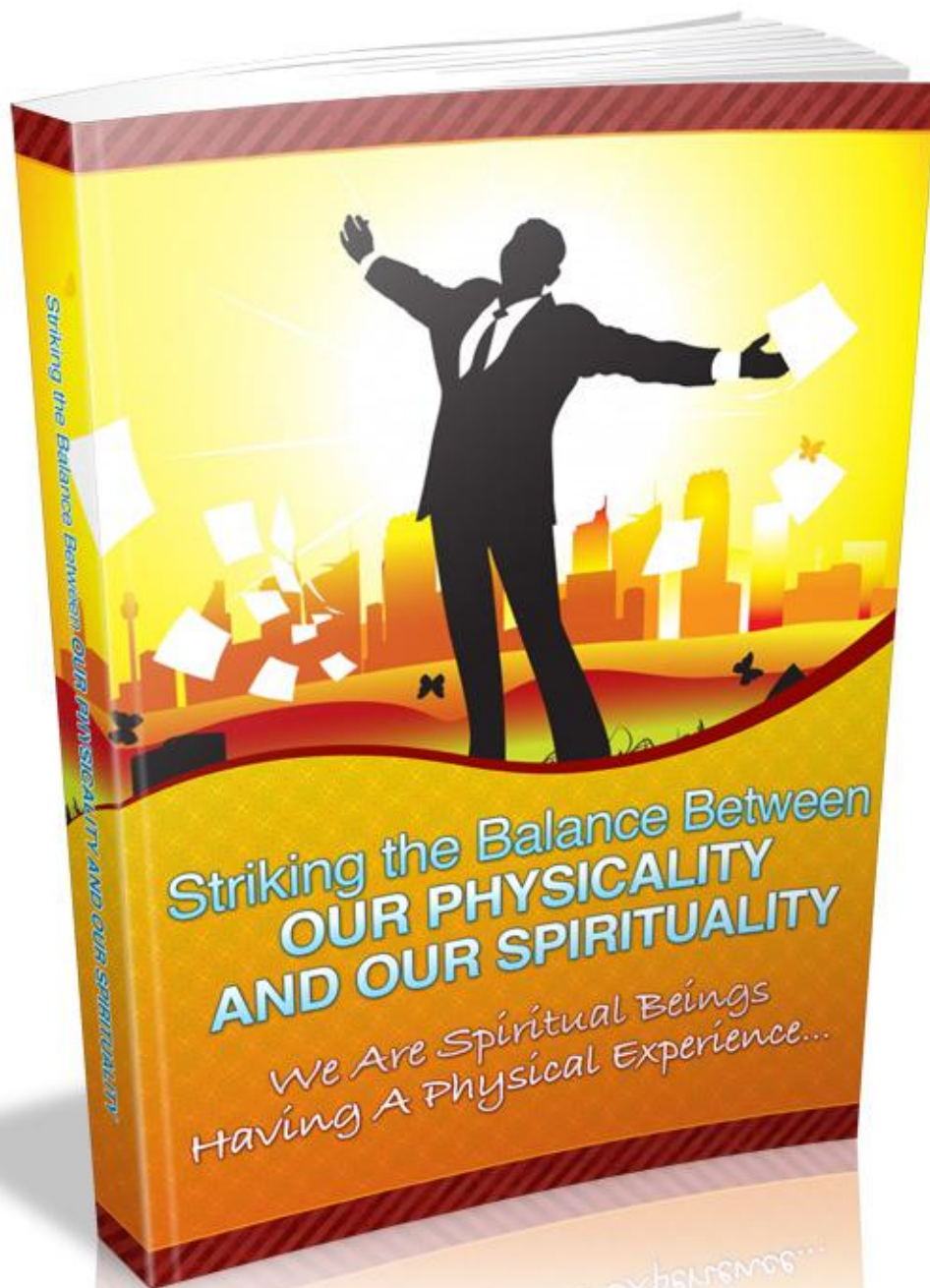




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Introduction

Our spirituality and our physicality are the two components of which we are made. If we could strike the right balance between the concrete and the abstract parts of our being, we could definitely turn ourselves into better people.

This eBook takes you through striking this all-important balance.

Chapter 1:

The Right Balance

Summary

What is the right balance between our physicality and our spirituality? When do we say that it has been struck?

The Right Balance

The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.

Buddha

Man is a complex compound. He is made up of one part mind and one part matter. When the two parts are harmoniously joined, he sparkles like a diamond with the joy of life. But when the two parts conflict or are unbalanced, the result is a dismal lump of coal.

We tend to forget that we are not physical beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings undergoing a physical experience. The spiritual being needs the human body to explore life to the fullest and to propagate life on earth. And the material body seeks the spirit to motivate it higher, beyond the baser instincts of animals.

A balance has to be struck between our physicality and our spirituality. There are many ways and aspects to this quest. In the following chapters, we will explore the techniques of Yoga, Qigong, Zen Buddhism and other forms of meditation to quell the mind and harmonies it with the body.

The search for three vital qualities that act as the cornerstones of our lives are also explored in The Three Pillars of Life. Spiritual nourishment is outlined in Feeding Your Soul and laughter, the best medicine is administered in yet another chapter.

Disturbing influences on the Phi-Psi balance are discussed and the role that money plays in our lives is also investigated. No discussion on body and spirit can be complete without evaluating healthy sexual relationships. Towards a Spiritual

Sexuality ponders on Sex & the Spirit. And finally we close with a few reflections on the power of prayer.

Welcome to a journey of self exploration, where we travel at the interface of mind and matter!

Chapter 2:

The Three Pillars of Life

Summary

We may not realize their significance but this is what life stands on.

The Three Pillars of Life

“We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings undergoing a physical experience.”

Gurus and holy books have reminded us of this message since the beginning of civilization. We tend to focus on the needs of our bodies all the time. And when we feel empty and desperate, we turn towards spiritual fulfillment. You may be a fine, healthy young man or woman, but if your spirit is depressed, your body will soon begin to suffer.

In the words of the Buddha *"The mind is everything. What you think you become."*

To achieve a balanced mind and in turn to live a balanced physical existence, three qualities have to be in perfect equilibrium – Wisdom, Benevolence and Courage. A balance of these 3 qualities ensures that you achieve your goals in life with zest and discipline while also being compassionate to your fellow beings, guided by wisdom.

If you only have passion without wisdom and compassion, you may become a cruel and foolish person. Benevolence alone without willpower and wisdom will make you a useless romantic idealist. And wisdom alone without action and kindness will turn you into a reclusive hermit. Theosophy teaches that when these three virtues are kept in equilibrium, Man can become fully effective and happy in the world.

Just try it out. Make a list of your friends and tick away in 3 columns against their names. You will be able to see one or two of the above qualities missing in them. And you will find that he or she who has all the three virtues in balance is the best human being among them all.

Similarly, the Kaballah teaches that Life has 3 Pillars – Judgment, Mercy and Compassion. When the opposing instincts of Judgment and Mercy are tempered by Compassion, a balance is struck in our spirituality and this in turn brings equilibrium to our physical world.

Chapter 3:

What Disturbs the Balance?

Summary

We don't want these but we need them. These are the temptations that our physicality may crave for but our spirituality abhors.

What Disturbs the Balance?

***Drugs** are a waste of time. They destroy your memory and your self-respect and everything that goes along with your self esteem”*

- Kurt Cobain, singer of grunge band Nirvana

The fact that the man who said this line succumbed to a drug overdose is a sobering thought. It reflects the deadly power that narcotics, alcohol, tobacco and other addictions have over their victim's mind.

The most important thing to remember in the quest for a physical-spiritual balance is that your body is a Temple in which your Mind is the High Priest. Allowing destructive forces like addictions and bad habits to occupy the temple is to weaken and finally kill the High Priest.

Some drugs induce an elevated state of altered consciousness. Unfortunately, the fantastic perceptions that a drug user experiences do not last very long. What lasts long is the terrible addiction to the vice. A very heavy price – that of loss of control – is paid for an illusion of power and enlightenment.

Food determines our spiritual outlook too. We say – he is like a tiger, she is like a sheep, they behave like vultures – all these archetypes emerge from food habits and their implications for our spiritual nature. Red meats, alcohol, tobacco, fermented and stale foods weaken the Temple of the Body. These foods stress the digestive, circulatory and breathing systems. Vegetarian food that has a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and vitamins is easily digested, assimilated and excreted. Certain foods affect the neuro-transmitters (chemicals in the brain) and affect our daily functions like memory, muscle coordination and sleep. Bad food can also change your moods and the way you perceive the world around you.

Hence the maxim – *You are what you eat*. Eating a balanced meal with plenty of water and exercise and staying away from toxic habits can keep the Temple of the Body clean and shining. Search within your mind, you can achieve an altered consciousness just by meditation, where is the need for drugs and alcohol?

Fasting periodically and correctly can cleanse the body of undesirable toxins and free radicals that cause ageing. Consuming minimal or no food at all for a few days can give your body a chance to excrete the accumulated waste products and rebuild the stressed out body. Fasting combined with meditation is an excellent way to give your body a break and to allow it to reacquaint itself with its Spiritual High Priest!

Chapter 4:

Laughing on the Tightrope

Summary

Many walk the tightrope. Only a few can dare laugh when they are there.

Laughing on the Tightrope

“A well-developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life.”

- William Arthur Ward

Imagine you are walking down the street. There's a stranger standing by the street side. A girl walks looking backwards, bumps into a fat man, and gets the wind knocked out of her. You laugh heartily and so does the stranger near you. You look at each other and smile in acknowledgement. You don't know each other, but the joke created a brief cheery connection between the two of you.

Sometimes your spirit becomes so lost and distant from your physical self, that it takes a good bout of laughter to get back in touch. Your spirit is a funny guy too. Why do we have to look at all things spiritual as solemn quests for enlightenment? Spirits don't wear long hooded robes and carry candles in dark dungeons. Nor do they prefer to freeze on top of the Himalayas with half naked hermits for company. Our spirits are the residents of our bodies. It's just that we are so busy building better bodies and furnishing them with shiny things that we end up evicting the lawful resident or banishing him to a dark and damp corner of our cellar.

Get that spirit back up into the living hall of your life. Treat him to a drink and enjoy a good laugh. His hearty laughter will ring through the rooms of your body and resonate in your heart, lungs, veins and bones!

Watch some good old slapstick classics like Laurel and Hardy or Charlie Chaplin. Or roll on the floor with Mr. Bean. Laughter vibrates the body like nothing does. Don't just titter at something funny. Laugh out loud, for Pete's sake!

When your Body and Spirit have found each other again through a good laugh, they can walk cheerfully through life. Laughter is your mind's way of saying that nothing is stronger than your Soul. The day you stop smiling and laughing, your spirit languishes in that cellar again and your lonely body starts feeling cold and miserable once again.

So grab that pole of laughter and walk the tightrope of life as heartily as you can!

Chapter 5:

Money and the Soul

Summary

Money feeds the soul. Or, does it?

Money and the Soul

*Go miser go, for money sell your soul.
Trade wares for wares and trudge from pole to pole,
So others may say when you are dead and gone.
See what a vast estate he left his son.*

- John Dryden, 17th century poet

Are you like this miser who is a slave to his bags of money? Or are you at the opposite end, a hopeless spendthrift with butterfingers, never getting a grip of your finances? In your quest for striking the balance between your physicality and spirituality, you must also examine your relationship with money. Here are 5 ways to keep your financial life in equilibrium.

1. Balance your finances. If you live in an idealistic world where you believe money will automatically come if you just do your own thing, you may be disillusioned after a while. Work hard with clear goals and a plan to achieve them. Remember that you sometimes have to work on less appetizing routine tasks to earn your bread and butter. Build up your finances until you can quit your day job and follow your dreams.
2. Balance your creative and spiritual side by also working on a part time job you love but doesn't yet bring in big money. Your hobbies may give good clues on where your real aptitude lies. Superstars have worked as waiters and pizza girls until they struck gold with their special talents.
3. Sitting around waiting to attract money and success doesn't work. Follow the Laws of Action. You will attract more if you work more! Remember that a donkey laden with a hundred self-help books is still a donkey!

4. Spiritual pursuit should not leave you floating in the clouds. We are not ghosts who can abandon our bodies for pursuit of the cosmos, at least not yet! Our spiritual world lies on the hard ground of the earth, where we walk – body and soul - hand in hand. Excessive contemplation will paralyze you and make action difficult.
5. Learn to give and receive graciously. Considering money as evil is also an extreme position. Money can be perceived as energy, flowing from others to you and from you to even more people. You are the carrier of the energy and can improve the flow to other human beings too, creating a continuous and harmonious synergy.

Chapter 6:

Toward a Spiritual Sexuality

Summary

A lot is said about sexuality being something more than the routinely corporal act that it is generally reduced to be. Let us begin accepting the concept of spiritual sexuality.

Toward a Spiritual Sexuality

“A mutual and satisfied sexual act is of great benefit to the average woman, the magnetism of it is health giving.”

- Margaret Sanger

The importance of a healthy sexual balance is often ignored in the search for physical-spiritual equilibrium. One extreme sees men and women dissatisfied with their sex lives and the other end is occupied with people frantically fornicating in the search for true fulfillment. Let us explore a few thoughts on Sex and the Spirit.

In these modern times where stress, career and lengthy educational years make increasing demands on people, the number of men and women with dysfunctional or totally non-existent sex lives is increasing. If abstinence is self imposed for spiritual reasons that's fine, but the average Joe or Jane are bound to feel frustrated and imbalanced without healthy sexual activity for years together. Repressed sexuality and childhood abuse can add on to a deadly mix resulting in sexual crimes or deviant behavior.

On the other hand, promiscuous behavior carries along the pattern of unsafe sexual practices and the possible baggage of guilt and assorted negative emotions. Failed relationships fuel further exploration, leading on to a hopeless trail of divorces and zipless one-night stands.

The ultimate goal in a sexual quest is that one loving man or woman who completes us both sexually and spiritually. There is nothing more satisfying than falling asleep after a session of great lovemaking with your arms around a spouse you love. That is even more satisfying when you know that the kids are happily sleeping in the next room. Sex after all was basically invented by our Creator for

procreation. While a healthy sexual relationship strikes a great balance for a couple, the weighing scale itself turns to gold when children enter their lives.

Creativity and a passionate sexuality tuned to each other's needs can keep a marriage hot for decades. A zest for life leads to healthy sex and vice versa. A husband and wife can become each other's yin and yang, thus striking a delightful balance between themselves as well as their individual mind, body and soul.

Chapter 7:

The Power of Prayer

Summary

Prayer is confidence. Prayer is knowledge. Prayer is belief. Prayer is power.

The Power of Prayer

“Prayer is when you talk to God. Meditation is when you listen to God.”

- Anon

Prayer is defined as the act of addressing a god or spirit with the intention of asking for something or just worshipping and giving praise to the deity. Scientific studies often explore the ability of prayer to heal the sick and injured. But every evening when we get down to pray, it is we who heal ourselves, bringing our mind, body and soul to an intimate get together.

Some African societies still practice Animism, a tradition wherein plants, rocks, waterfalls and even natural phenomena like rain and thunder are believed to embody divinity. Connecting with spirits is still a strong part of animism today. A shaman listens to these spirits and conveys the messages to his people.

In modern times, an individual has to function as his own personal shaman. The Mind prays to the Soul to heal the Body. In these stressful times, the spiritual and physical selves get alienated and sometimes are not even on speaking terms! In the words of William Inge – “Prayer gives a man the opportunity of getting to know a gentleman he hardly ever meets. I do not mean his maker, but himself.”

Prayer can be externally focused as in Christian, Islamic and Jewish traditions or internal contemplation as in Buddhism. Praying is also used as a faith healing process to prevent or cure illness. While the efficacy of faith healing is looked at with skepticism by the scientific community, both eastern and western science accepts the ability of prayer and meditation to bring about peace in an individual. Whereas community prayer and ritualized religion requires the devotees to use pre-scripted prayers, each individual can also use his own inner dialogue when he meditates alone. Either way can be quite effective to harmonize the body and soul of the truly devout.

Chapter 8:

Oriental Methods of Achieving Balance

Summary

The strength that lies in oriental methods to achieve physical and spiritual balance is irrefutable. Here are some methods, explained.

Oriental Methods of Achieving Balance

“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.”

- Chinese Proverb

Oriental culture is rich in spiritual philosophy and practice. Numerous martial arts and meditation techniques have explored the relation between the body and mind for ages.

Meditation is a general term for a state of relaxation wherein one moves beyond routine ‘reflex’ thinking into a higher state of consciousness. Practiced across all religions and communities, this discipline has been found to make changes in the circulatory, brain and respiratory processes of the body and also reduce stress significantly.

Qi Gong (or *ch'i kung*) is a form of Chinese meditation using slow dance like movements and breath control to stimulate the chi (life force) in the body. Studies show that Qigong improves health and makes the body supple and calms the mind. Compared to Oriental martial arts, this practice focuses more on balancing the ‘chi’. Over 200 million people in the world practice various forms of qigong today.

Zen Buddhism is a school of Buddhism which believes that human beings have an inherent body of wisdom within themselves (a Buddha nature), which can be gained and perceived through meditation and experiencing life mindfully. This method focuses on self realization through actual experience rather than depending on scriptures and theoretical knowledge.

Acupuncture is a method of sticking needles on certain meridian points on the body to help the Qi (vital energy) to flow smoothly through the body. Chinese philosophy uses the concept of *yin-yang*, wherein everything in the world has an

opposite that moves in harmony with it. *Qi* is intangible and is the yang of the body – its tangible counterpart is yin, represented by Blood in the body.

Judo (meaning ‘gentle way’) is a Japanese martial art which generally uses the opponent’s force against him. Though developed as a fighting art, its philosophy extends towards improving its practitioner’s physical and spiritual health. Its founder was Jigoro Kano who believed that judo could also maximize efficiency in everyday life outside the martial arena.

Chapter 9:

Achieving Balance through Yoga

Summary

Why has the world warmed up to Yoga all of a sudden?

Achieving Balance through Yoga

“The meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God or others, but in the ceaseless realization of Yoga, of Union.”

- Rabindranath Tagore, Indian Poet

The first image that yoga often brings to our mind is that of complicated postures and exercises. But Yoga means Union. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit verb ‘*yu*’, and means "to control" or "to unite". Yoga uses breathing techniques, exercises and meditation to achieve a balance between our physical and spiritual form. Through yoga, one can achieve a total overhaul of the body and spirit and help in maintaining a calm and peaceful state throughout the day.

In traditional Hatha Yoga, one gets into specific asanas or postures and stays in that pose for some minutes. These Yoga asanas tone up all the organs of the body and facilitate a harmonious coordination between all the systems of the body. Thus the muscles, joints and nerves are strengthened and the circulatory, digestive and breathing systems are also stimulated.

Breathing in particular is enhanced by increasing lung capacity. Tight clothes and work stress cause our breathing to be shallow. Yoga teaches how to use the entire breathing system – the lungs, chest, diaphragm and abdomen – to take in more of the life-giving oxygen, thus charging the body and spirit with vital energy.

Proper breathing also balances our frame of mind. Anger makes breathing sharp and shallow. Peace brings about deep and healthy breathing. Fear can make us hold our breath and almost suffocate. The ‘*pranayama*’ technique involves balancing the ‘*prana*’ (breath or life-energy) by proper breathing and posture.

The practice of yoga involves less risk of joint or tissue injury, lower calorie consumption, focus on internal awareness and optimized effort as compared to

other forms of exercises and aggressive sports. The physiological, psychological and bio-chemical benefits of yoga are well documented.

You don't need any kind of expensive equipment or facilities to practice yoga. All you need to bring to the practice is your 'mind, body and spirit' along with loads of discipline and a strong desire to achieve a physical-spiritual balance.

Chapter 10:

Feeding Your Soul

Summary

The soul needs to be enriched, not just the body.

Feeding the Soul

“The best and safest thing is to keep a balance in your life, acknowledge the great powers around us and in us. If you can do that, and live that way, you are really a wise man.”

– Euripides, ancient Greek dramatist

Are you punishing yourself with a ruthless work routine? Have you forgotten to feed your soul as much as you nourish your body? Do something that gives you an inner pleasure. Take a quiet walk in a park and listen to the birds. Go for a swim. Read a classic work of literature. Listen to a melodious song.

Even if you are in the middle of the maddening office, close your eyes and **visualize an oasis** of greenery and water deep inside your mind. Walk deep into your soul and wash your face with the sparkling waters of that oasis. When you open your eyes again, you will be fresh and balanced and can tackle work again. Thus your soul has uplifted your fatigued body.

Exercise your body. You can practice yoga or transcendental meditation or play a tennis game or just walk briskly down the stairs instead of taking the elevator. The heady rush of endorphins brought on by exercise is your body’s reward for the effort. Your rejuvenated body will lift your tired soul.

The body and soul **can work together** like this, each taking turns to cheer up the other. You know that your inner soul always loves your physical body and is always ready to help. But it is often the body that forgets the soul, turns down its advice and suffers as a result. When your body and spirit join forces, nothing can stop you!

The best way to **recharge your soul** is by giving love to other beings, be they human, animal or even plant life. As you give, your love awakens the love within

other beings. If you hate, the same negative energy is reciprocated. He is truly great who gives love to the one who spews hate.

The word 'balance' is crucial. Getting too caught up with spirituality is as dangerous as obsessing with your body. Gullible folks seeking nirvana fall prey to fraudsters and doomsday prophets like David Koresh. You are your best teacher. Look within and look without. Your inner soul and the outer world are like **yin and yang**, always circling and affecting each other.

Conclusion

The right balance between physicality and spirituality is quite elusive but the few people who have managed that are among the most successful people in the world today.

This is a very complex area of knowledge, where the education is self-sustaining. As you practice these techniques more and more, you keep learning more things.

You learn how to improve yourself corporally and spiritually and you learn how to find the right balance.

Finding that is nothing short of attaining nirvana on earth.

All the best to you!!!