



TOUCHSTONES

Balance

March 2022

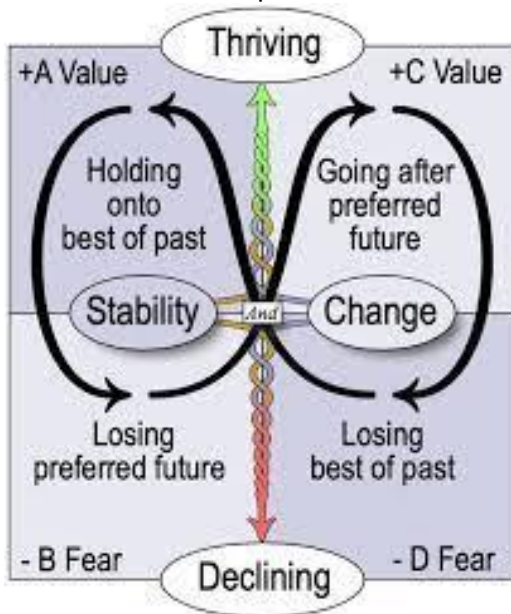
Our theme for March invites us to consider what we are balancing, or not, and how. “Balance” invests us in ambiguity, tension, and compassion. It says that things can be gray, contextual, and dependent.

One key question is “what are we balancing?” Balance isn’t always good if one of the things we are balancing is unhealthy or unwise. If we are trying to “balance” something that isn’t good for us or the world, then we should stop.

But if the things we are balancing are good things or necessary things, then we must figure out how to do that well. Part of this is just acknowledging that we are balancing it. Admit to ourselves and the world that we are engaged in a balancing act. That multiple values, priorities, or issues are making a claim on us. And we can’t just “choose one.” This can be a way of asking for help or just noticing what is true.

One concept I learned about a while ago that’s very helpful on this is something called “polarity management.” This is the idea that we need to balance two things in a dynamic and fluid way, to maximize the positive quality of each while minimizing the negative part. The classic example is individual/community. Too much individualism is loneliness and isolation. Too much community is groupthink, suffocating, control. So, you must move back and forth to get a good balance. You can’t get stuck.

Here’s a visual example:



As you see here, maximizing the best of “stability” and “change” leads to thriving, while getting the worst of those things leads to declining. But it is never static. So, you want to keep it moving and hold both needs as true.

As the saying goes, the tree that does not bend in the wind will snap. But the tree that will bend survives. Balance is achieved, in part, through motion.

In faith,
Matthew

Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1: "The aim is to balance the terror of being alive with the wonder of being alive."

Carlos Castaneda



Day 2: "Somehow, we'll find it. The balance between whom we wish to be and whom we need to be. But for now, we simply have to be satisfied with who we are." Brandon Sanderson

Day 3: "Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some." Robert Fulghum

Day 4: "How odd to be made of flesh, balanced on bone, and filled with a soul you've never met." Tarryn Fisher

Day 5: "You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact and remember that *Life's a Great Balancing Act*. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft. And never mix up your right foot with your left." Dr. Seuss

Day 6: "The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?" Oscar Wilde

Day 7: "Life is a balance of holding on and letting go." Keith Urban

Day 8: "A man without contradictions to balance him will soon veer off." Mark Lawrence

Day 9: "This is a difficult balance, telling the truth: how much to share, how much to keep, which truths will wound but not ruin, which will cut too deep to heal." Ally Condie

Day 10: "...You'll have to balance your goals and hopes with feeding yourself, paying debts, finding work, settling for what you can get." Neil Gaiman

Day 11: "Countless words / count less / than the silent balance / between yin and yang." Lao Tzu

Day 12: "The richest and fullest lives attempt to achieve an inner balance between three realms: work, love, and play." Erik Erikson

Day 13: "A bad day for your ego is a great day for your soul." Jillian Michaels

Day 14: "Without balance, a life is no longer worth the effort." Olen Steinhauer

Day 15: "True stability results when presumed order and presumed disorder are balanced. A truly stable system expects the unexpected, is prepared to be disrupted, waits to be transformed." Tom Robbins

Day 16: "Value is not made of money, but a tender balance of expectation and longing." Barbara Kingsolver

Day 17: "There are those wonderful moments of clarity in life when one is reminded how irreparably flawed we humans are. Once, when I was nineteen, on the subway in Boston I lost my balance slightly and bumped into an elderly woman. I quickly apologized and she replied, 'Well, hold on to something, stupid.' There it is. That's it. That's it in a nutshell." Paula Poundstone

Day 18: "Food is an important part of a balanced diet." Fran Lebowitz

Day 19: "But it seemed to me that this was the way we all lived: full to the brim with gratitude and joy one day, wrecked on the rocks the next. Finding the balance between the two was the art and the salvation." Elizabeth Berg

Day 20: "The re-establishment of an ecological balance depends on the ability of society to counteract the progressive materialization of values." Ivan Illich

Day 21: "At the heart of science is an essential balance between two seemingly

contradictory attitudes—an openness to new ideas, no matter how bizarre or counterintuitive they may be, and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. This is how deep truths are winnowed from deep nonsense." Carl Sagan

Day 22: "Do not imagine that the good you intend will balance the evil you perform." Norman Mac Donald

Day 23: "I want to caution you against the idea that balance has to be a routine that looks the same week in and week out." Kevin Thoman



Day 24: "War is a time out of balance. When it is truly over, we must work to restore peace and sacred harmony once again." Joseph Bruchac

Day 25: "The balance of your personality is your temperament, all the biologically based tendencies that contribute to your consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving." Helen Fisher

Day 26: "Life had taught him about something far more complicated than justice. Its name was balance." Carsten Jensen

Day 27: "I survive by finding the sweet spot between reason and unreason, between the rational and irrational." Dean Koontz

Day 28: "There's a major fault in Western society. It makes room for only one god, and in only one gender. There's no balance, no co-existence, no partnership." Tomson Highway

Day 29: "A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct." Frank Herbert

Day 30: "How one walks through the world, the endless small adjustments of balance, is affected by the shifting weights of beautiful things." Elaine Scarry

Day 31: "...you have to use your failures as stepping stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair. In the end, it's all a question of balance." Rohinton Mistry

Family Matters

Learning Balance

Children learn to balance before they can progress to higher-level gross motor skills like negotiating stairs, as well as hopping, galloping, and skipping. These may appear simple, but they are actually quite complex. Mastering the necessary balance for all of these movements is an important aspect of child development.

If physical balance is challenging, life balance is far more so. Balance in children's lives is very important. Unitarian Universalist minister Robert Fulghum, author of the piece, *All I Really Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, writes, "Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some." And yet, children's lives can often be as frenetic and unbalanced as that of their parents. While it is true that the purpose of life is not to go faster, children are often caught up in the whirlwind.



In *Creating Balance in Children's Lives*, Lorraine Moore and Peggy Henrikson, write, "Achieving a state of balance, and thus harmonious behavior and effective learning abilities, has become more and more difficult given the changes and pressures of today's society." The benefits to a child with a balanced lifestyle are enormous and include feeling good about oneself, experiencing life with joy and tolerance rather than frustration and anger, approaching challenges and crises with confidence, etc. Children learn balance by modeling parents and by benefit of a life structure and daily schedule in which balance is embedded. It requires that children have both the ability and freedom to say yes and no to all the activities that are open to them. Yet, it is difficult for children's lives to be more balanced than their parents. Source: *Touchstones*

Family Activity: Stories about Balance

These three children's books offer different, thoughtful considerations about balance that parents can read/watch and discuss with their children.

Just A Little Bit by

Ann Tompert and Lynn Munsinger:

How will elephant and mouse ride on the seesaw? With a LOT of help!

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtUpMPwxHq0> (4:47)

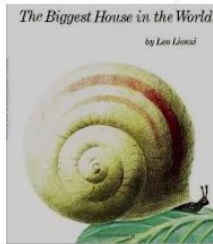


The Biggest House in the World by

Leo Lionni: A

young snail dreams of having the biggest house—or shell—in the world. Then one day, his wise father tells him the story of another snail with the same dream. Things quickly go out of balance.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4LvkETb8uU> (4:49)

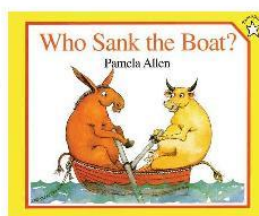


Who Sank the Boat?

by Pamela Allen:

Beside the sea, there once lived a cow, a donkey, a sheep, a pig, and a tiny little mouse. They were good friends, and one warm, sunny morning, for no particular reason, they decided to go for a row in the bay. Do you know who sank the boat?

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CmXIntGEIQ> (2:59)



Balance/Harmony in Life

The Tao of Pooh

MalJohn2

Benjamin Hoff (and Pooh)

remind us that happiness lies in how we live our lives....

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said to Piglet ... "what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully. "It's the same thing," he said.

A basic Taoist principle is that we appreciate life as it is—the sweet with the bitter; that we savor the sweet and that we learn from the bitter. Pooh Bear has that figured out, except he doesn't know that he has....

...He often tells his friends ...that he loves honey, but he will ...admit that he isn't sure if he loves the actual taste of honey more than the anticipation of the taste of honey. Both are so, so sweet!

When we enjoy our everyday moments fully, we, too, realize that we can enjoy the journey as much as the destination. Like Pooh, the *anticipation* of arriving at the destination is just as sweet to us as the final quest. And *The Tao of Pooh* reminds us that nothing and doing are equally important. Because in Taoism, doing nothing signifies *something*.

...On any spiritual journey we learn that balance and harmony within our bodies and minds will lead to balance and harmony in our lives....

Hoff ...gently reminds us ...that we are enough just as we are. No one realizes this more than Pooh Bear.

Source: <https://thegiftsthatweshare.wordpress.com/2015/08/23/winnie-the-pooh-has-all-the-answers/>





The Unitarian Universalist Church
4848 Turner St.
Rockford, IL 61107

- Members and friends of the church who live at Wesley Willows are invited to join others and Rev. Matthew on the 4th Tuesday of most months at 9am. We will meet in the fellowship hall at Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

Want to have a group – a book group, a parent group, a “circle supper”, or whatever you like?

– just email Autumn at office@uurockford.org and she can give you the Zoom login and password

Balance & Repairing the World

The repair of the world is often addressing problems that result from imbalance. Many occur in society and are created and sustained over generations by an imbalance of economic, political, gender, and racial power that manifest locally, nationally, and globally through financial inequity (e.g., gender wage gap, income & wealth inequality, poverty, homelessness, and more), racism due to white privilege & supremacy, food insecurity, food deserts & famine, health inequity, educational inequity, and more. In September 2000, the UN adopted 8 Millennium Development Goals that address many important global imbalances. Notable among them was “Ensure environmental sustainability.” Accelerating climate change and resulting environmental degradation are imbalances that also must be addressed.