

The Insight of Balance

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There is a proverb from India that states, “everyone lives in a house with four rooms.” A physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual room. Unless we visit each room each day, even if only to keep it aired out, we cannot be a completed person.



Elizabeth Kulber Ross adopted this imagery for her Four Quadrants lecture that became the well-known model of the hospice movement in America. This imagery is not however about death and dying, for which Dr. Ross was renowned, but rather about striving for balance in daily living.

It is as simple as a circle, divided into four equal parts.



The Physical Quadrant. At birth we are born into a physical body that we must learn to operate. We spend the first years of life learning skills such as how to walk, reach, rollover, sit, stand, walk, run, and jump. About the age of two, we find we are mastering the basic mechanics of the body, we have it under control, and we advance to developing the second quadrant.

The Emotional Quadrant. Most of us that have children or have been around children are familiar with the common term, “the terrible twos.” The two-year-old is beginning to discover emotions and how emotions function and feel. Young children go through a period of becoming anxious when they separate from a parent. They will scream if disappointed, laugh if delighted, and desire almost everything they see. About the age of five or six we begin to get a grasp on the emotions.

The Mental Quadrant. If we are fortunate enough to live in a developed country, we are sent off to school to learn reading, writing, mathematics, history, philosophy, and in general, develop our intellectual abilities. We spend much of our lifetime cultivating the mental quadrant.

The Spiritual Quadrant. When the first three quadrants are developed to a level of our own satisfaction, we begin to wonder about **The Spiritual Quadrant**. It may be that pursuit that has brought you here now. The spiritual quadrant opens for everyone, if not by exploration and intent, by an automatic intuition as death and death’s transition approach. If children die prematurely, all the knowledge, skill, balance, and wisdom that would have been unveiled in due time, opens to them to help make the death transition. Having worked in suicide intervention as well as hospice, having had the fortunate experiences of living in far-flung places like Alaska and Hawaii, having worked with Native Americans and others whose daily life were not polluted by civilization, concrete,

and artificial living, I have seen and heard miraculous instances about the opening of the spiritual quadrant.

Living in these four rooms is more than one giant, long journey for achievement over the course of a lifetime. Living daily in these four rooms is the key to balance and development that will bring you satisfaction and fulfillment. As adults, more and more of us sit behind a desk all day with no physical activity. If you don't spend some time in the physical quadrant, you will soon lose your health. Some of us have unfinished emotional business. The result is often sudden uncontrollable flashes of rage, anger, fear, the unexpected flooding of tears and the inability to love sufficiently and connect with others in our lives. Not spending enough time in the mental quadrant means we have not taken full advantage of the wisdom and knowledge left to us from others who went before and left us a roadmap.

Often people try to solve their needs in one quadrant by working in another. Someone with anger and fear begins Chi Gong or martial arts, thinking it is a spiritual practice, which of course parts of it are. But if their underlying problem is emotional, such as anger or fear, then working at a physical discipline will not solve the emotional incompleteness. It will only help to ensure you don't confront it. Emotional needs usually respond to counseling, and are then enhanced with communications skills, from the mental, intellectual quadrant. This is how you receive the full benefit of Chi gong or marital arts from the physical quadrant. With the physical, emotional, and mental quadrants in harmony, the spiritual quadrant will fully open for you. It simply demonstrates how hard some people can work and yet be unknowingly misdirected in their search.

Most of us are naturally attracted to one quadrant over the other. I have spent my career in human services and counseling, obviously working in the mental and emotional quadrants. My husband, who was a professional baseball player and Olympic participant, spent his time and energy in the physical quadrant. Even though we are naturally attracted to one dominant quadrant, we must spend time visiting all the quadrants equally if we are to balance our life, our development, understanding, insight, satisfaction, and complete our personal path in this life.

We need others to mirror for us during our development, to give feedback, to help in the search, and to pass along what they have already found that works well. One of my favorite quotes is, "you can't see the picture from inside the frame."

Look for balance, practice balance, strive for balance daily in all four of the rooms of your soul, enjoy the difference it will soon provide and become the completed person you were meant to be.

