

GET BALANCE INTO YOUR LIFE

Transcript of Work/Life Balance Talk prepared for Health Fair Event at the Park Avenue Hotel, Belfast on 29th March 2008, organised as part of the Health and Well-being week, by the East Belfast Community Development Agency

By coming into this Talk you have made a conscious decision to make change happen in your life. You have said to yourself, 'I could get information here that will make my life more bearable, more manageable, happier, healthier,'.

Well, yes you will but I want to know if you are going to use that information to make change happen.

All the information in the world is of no use to you unless you are going to do something with it.

So how am I going to help you help yourself?

What is All About People all about?

Who am I and why do I want to talk to you about this.

I am Kate Elliott a Business and Personal Development Coach and helping people to get more of what they want out of life is what I do. My business is called 'all about people' because that is what I care passionately about.

I have a question for you today.

In the past year have you had the time off you wanted to have?

Have you had the lifestyle you wanted to?

Have you had the big things happen in your life that you have hoped for?

Have you made the money you had hoped to make?

Have you been having fun?

Not really – not as much as I would like to - I hear you say - not quite.

Maybe things haven't been all that bad, maybe they've just been ok and ok is ok. It's in our comfort zone.

Maybe things have been ok and you've been thinking, 'well things are ok but I'm tired waiting for my break, for my time to happen. When are things going to take off, get easier?'

You know there's something about how we are emotionally about this. Emotionally it feels safer, it feels better to have a picture in our head of how we want things to change, of how we want things to be. The life we are waiting for.

BUT - While it's a picture we will go on waiting and things will go on being ok, and we will get by. But we just get by.

It takes some guts to get up and decide to take charge of how our lives are shaping up. It takes guts to get out of our comfort zone and really move our lives forward.

Maybe the curiosity you have in you when you decided to come into this Talk means you are seriously ready to give change a chance.

If you want to give change a chance then you have to let some new things into your life and you have to let some old things go. Things like your habits and the ways you are used to doing things.

So make a decision and feel a desire to get up and make changes to create the life you want. You are the only person in charge of your life. So don't blame other people, in work or at home if things stay as they are.

So understand one very important point today.

Doing what is best for you in your life will benefit you, it will also benefit your family, it will benefit your work.

So what are you going to do about it?

AND

When are you going to do it?

BECAUSE

Action – is what will breath life into your intentions.

Today I am going to tell you some new ways of going about things and I will remind you of some ways you already know.

BUT beware of the words, 'I know that already' these are very dangerous words.

When we use these words we create a closed door in our minds and this will stop us from moving forward.

WHY IS THAT?

Because 'I know that already' is another way of saying I'm not going to get out of this rat trap 'cause I couldn't be bothered. It is an excuse to do nothing and carry on moaning about the difficult life you have.

TEN POINT PLAN FOR ACTION

Lets start with the basics.

Take this one step at a time.

LOOK AT WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW

Take a reality check

1. Look closely at how you spend your time at the minute.

The chances are that a significant amount of your time is spent on unnecessary activity. I don't mean that you are carelessly wasting your time. No.

You may be so snowed under that you just keep on doing everything that comes your way because you haven't the time to step back and look at whether you really need to do all these things that you just keep on doing.

A big step here is to start writing down how you spend your time.

Write this any way you like. You might want to keep a diary. You might want to just make a list and keep it stuck to the fridge. What ever you feel is ok for you. Maybe you could buy a new notebook, a symbol of your new chapter in your life.

You could take the time each night before you go to sleep and write out how you spent time that day. What things took up most of your time. Was it a person, a situation, emotional upset. Doing stuff for other people. Sleeping? If you are in a job look at how you do the job. Do you take work home and use your home and family time to finish jobs you would rather be doing in work.

MAKE YOURSELF A PROMISE write down how you spend your time for at least one week. Then go back through your notes. You will start to see more clearly that there are many ways you can rearrange how you use your time to free it up and make it more flexible. You will see things you should stop doing right away.

NOW!

You may think this is only one more job to do in your already busy day. Think again.

Consider the word SPEND We talk about how we SPEND our time.

That's because once it's used it's gone forever. No matter how powerful we are in this world we can never get that time back.

This is where you have to make a commitment to yourself to take the first step and make an investment in your future. Take time out to look at how you spend your time.

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If you don't think that it's worth it, then you don't think you are worth it. If you had a best friend, some one you really care about, and you knew they needed to change their lives a little bit and they would be much happier. Wouldn't you tell them to go ahead and take the time to do that. Wouldn't you help them to do that. Well, cut yourself some slack and help yourself to have a better life. Treat yourself the way you would treat your friend who needs help. Take time to make time.

2. Give yourself permission to have the life you really want.

You are allowed to have dreams and ambitions.

Picture in your mind, what would your ideal life look like.

What if you had all the time in the world, what would your life look like.

What difference would this ideal life mean to you. Make this picture a reality by clearly knowing the difference it would make to you.

Write this down. What difference would this ideal life mean to you.

By knowing this you will then have a focus for your action. You will have a meaningful goal to achieve.

You will not make a difference to your life unless you have a clear goal to aim for. This means all your actions and plans will be focussed in the same direction, you are then more likely to stick to the changes and the actions. **The activities you do to get there become less important compared to the picture of success you see as your ideal life.**

3. Then we have the 'YES BUT' EXCUSES.

These are excuses, I've heard them all, infact I've made them all.

When you have a goal that you truly believe in you will be drawn towards it, motivated by it, it takes on a life of it's own.

Lack of confidence in yourself and in your abilities will make you come up with excuses not to make changes. Life is so much more comfortable if we just don't argue with the gremlins inside our heads.

There will always be a voice telling us we can't do it, we can't make changes, too much trouble, what would others say. The famous voice many of us have is saying 'who are you to be planning to do that' 'who

are you to try that'? Well in the words of the famous and fabulous Mr Nelson Mandela, 'who are you not to do it'.

You have been born with many qualities. During our lives we become so buried in the daily demands of life that we often lose sight of who we really are, of the talents we really have. This means we get into our routines that are born of the demands of daily living and we just get caught up in the momentum of these demands. So to create some time out to have time for ourselves or to make life a little more bearable is beyond the reach of our imagination because there are so many demands between us and that idea.

You have to change your mind set around this. These voices of criticism are just voices. Do not engage with them, do not give them a life. Tell them you know they are only a gremlin and you will not be listening to them. You will then see that they will start to go away.

There is a trap here though, beware. Many of us take over the job of the gremlin by giving it our own voice. We hear ourselves saying to others how impossible things are, we beat ourselves up before we start. We see only the problems in the changes we are trying to make. We just keep on criticising. We rubbish our dreams by dismissing them every time they come around in our heads. There is always a reason not to do this.

OVERCOME this. Believe in yourself. Allow yourself the confidence in your own decisions, in your own dreams. No matter what you think right here right now, **YOU** are the only person standing between you and the changes you can make to give yourself a better balance in your life.

Take responsibility for your own choices and be positive about them.

When you believe in yourself and you know you have the ability to make changes happen you have half the battle won.

OK so far you have looked at how you spend your time.

You have created your picture of your ideal life.

You have dealt with all the excuses and given yourself permission to take action.

SO WHAT NEXT

4. What are your priorities?

When you look at the many many activities you have to carry out every day every week every month look very closely and carefully.

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Identify which of these activities make the biggest difference to you.
Which are the most important activities.
Don't be a busy fool focusing your time on many many trivial tasks.
Decide which tasks are the most important and give you most of what you need in life and focus on these. The important few.

How do you decide this?

Look at each activity and ask how does this serve my life. Does this give me a better life. Does this make me feel fulfilled.

Does this action take me closer to the goal of my ideal life.

If the answer is no then you don't do it or you change it in such a way that it does serve you to continue doing it.

Use your valuable energy only on what is important not on things that make no difference.

So here you have some thinking and analysing to do.
Look over the record you have of how you are spending your time and think carefully about all the things that are there.

5. So what do you do with the things you no longer want to do?

Well there may be some tasks you just stop and leave alone, and lo and behold no one notices that you are not doing them any more not even you notice.

Look at tasks and think can I delegate this job to someone else. Do you get the other members of the family to share the workload of the family life.

Do you assume they will look at you in disgust if you ask them to help. So not asking is easier.

Talk to the people around you and allow them into your little well managed existence. Allow others to have a go at doing things to help. Now they may not do it just as well as you but so what. It still gets done. Then the person who does it feels good because they know they have helped.

Asking your children and young people in the household gives them an opportunity to take responsibility to learn and develop life and social skills.

Look at your time wasters – these are the things you do which are just a waste of time, they happen everyday. Just make the decision to stop doing these things. Make a list of these time wasters, even though you know

what they are. Put the list up somewhere you will see it all the time, on the fridge door, on the office wall, your work station. The list will keep you aware of these things so you will always remember to stop and think, **then don't do them.**

Do you allow the telephone to rule your life, especially the mobile. You don't always have to answer it. People will leave messages. If you're busy text your reply or phone back when it's convenient. Telephones are there for your convenience not your inconvenience. By making yourself available to answer the phone every time it rings you are putting yourself under pressure and creating unnecessary stress in your already busy life.

Do people just drop in on you, are you really welcoming no matter what your commitments are? Allowing this to carry on puts more pressure on your already stretched time. It makes you feel stressed and anxious when you realise how behind you are with those things you haven't been able to do because of these interruptions.

You are allowed to excuse yourself and explain politely and assertively that you are in the middle of such and such, or sorry but you were just getting ready to go out. Just say it, if you are polite and courteous people will understand. Do not devalue your own life by allowing others to walk all over your personal needs.

What about clutter. What about being organised.

When we stuff our lives and homes and offices with stuff, with things we think we need we leave no room for change. No room for creativity, no room for the light to get in. While things around you are disorganised your head will be disorganised and cluttered. To have clear thinking you need a clutter free existence.

Did you ever find when you are having a big clear out and you start getting rid of bags of stuff. You take a moment in all the activity and you can almost feel the energy space around you getting bigger, you get a feeling inside yourself of motivation of excitement almost because of the possibilities a clear space creates.

If you are not organised or if you are suffocated with clutter, plan some time to start to organise how you do things. Then stick to this. You will start to find that being organised will create time on it's own.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN HABITS?

Are you the sort of person who thinks they can do everything all at the same time. Trying always to do too much all at once.

Even if you keep an appointment diary do you still double book yourself. Do you underestimate the amount of time it takes to do things. Always build in a little more time than you think it will take. Then wow, if you

get it done quicker well you have some time you didn't know you would have.

Most importantly 'Be Realistic about how you manage your time. Watch yourself and how you book things into your day whether it is business, family, social or otherwise. We all have habits driven by the type of people we are. We just need to be aware that these habits can get us into trouble and we need to watch and change how we do these things. **This does not change who we are, it just changes how we do things.**

6. Getting things done

To do lists, To do lists, To do lists.

We can overwhelm ourselves with to do lists. We find we make lists about lists and we only ever get a few of the items done.

We can write til the cows come home, I'm afraid lists don't get things done.

So what does?

Focus on the priorities.

Focus focus focus.

Decide what your priorities are for the week or for the day. Then make a conscious effort to complete three priority tasks. No more.

Think of how liberating that is. To give yourself permission to do three things, three important things. Then when you have finished these think how gratifying that is to have accomplished what you set out to do. That in itself gives you more energy.

When I talk of priority tasks I am talking about the areas of your life which are most important. Those things which bring you closer to living your ideal life.

For example if you think spending more quality time with your partner has been very hard lately. Then plan in one evening in the week when you will do something together. Go for a walk, go out for dinner, go to the pictures, whatever it takes but plan it in and do it. More family time, plan in one meal in the week when you will all be eating together and talk. Give it the importance it deserves and don't let other things push it to the side and take over.

Group your activities around the three most important areas of your life and do them in that order. This is such a liberating and empowering thing to do. You will find that you move through things more quickly and with less stress and anxiety because you are attending to the things that matter. Then you don't have to beat yourself up about not getting these things done because you will be doing them. The things that don't get done will

be the not so important things that don't serve you in this life. They will be the time wasters.

7. Don't try too much too quickly

The secret of success with any change process is to take it one step at a time. Make your changes one at a time, make them small changes and they will lead on to bigger changes when you are ready.

The important thing is you plan to make them and follow through. Take the action you have promised your self.

If you plan to make small changes, do one at a time then you will get them done.

You are setting yourself manageable tasks and you are being realistic. That way you will achieve what you set out to do.

Then you will enjoy the feeling of success when you look around and see that you have managed to make that change happen.

That feeling of success is liberating. It will give you confidence in yourself and your own abilities to take charge of your life. This will then motivate you to go on and make more changes.

Your self esteem grows in strength and you recognise that you can achieve what you want to. That ideal life gets more and more within your reach. Always have it there as your prize your ultimate goal.

OK so far you have looked at how you spend your time.

You have created your picture of your ideal life.

You have dealt with all the excuses and given yourself permission to take action.

You have decided your priorities.

You've decided how to deal with the things you no longer want to do.

You decided on the three most important things in your life.

You will be taking things one step at a time.

SO WHAT NEXT

8.The guilt

How not to feel guilty. What is it with us women? We can feel guilty about anything under the sun, anything. You name it we will beat ourselves up about it.

So what can we do about this.

Understand this.

The more you fill your own cup the more fulfilled you feel as a person.

The more fulfilled you feel, the more energy you have.

The more energy you have the more you can give to others, the happier you will be in your life. The more self less you will be in your relationships.

You are no good to anyone and no good to yourself if you are running on empty.

Having no energy means you are stressed, you feel incompetent. Being tired and pushed for time means you will make mistakes. Then you beat yourself up. Disorganised and badly planned time leaves you forgetting or unable to do things you've promised, then you beat yourself up again, you feel guilty.

Guilt, steals your energy, it steals your personality, and it steals your confidence. It is the strongest of the gremlins and it is always on watch duty. It lies in wait to pounce as soon as you are tired or stressed.

Making time for yourself through a planned and managed life will give you the energy you need to get things done and live guilt free.

9. So what about 'saying NO'?

Isn't that a favourite one we all have.

It's funny we are all so busy, we have so much to do and we still say yes to everything people ask of us. Why is that?

You have to be brave to say no to anyone. It is very difficult.

Do you find you are looking at someone who is asking something of you and in your head you're saying no and you just watch yourself saying yes. Then you're screaming inside yourself, why did I say yes.

Then what happens, you've put yourself under more pressure and more stress and you've added to the difficulties you already have.

People get used to having you say yes too. Then because you always say yes you are taken for granted, your yes actually is devalued. It is not as valuable as the yes that comes from a person who mostly will say no.

Saying No is an action you have to teach yourself how to do. It does not come easily or naturally.

It makes us feel very uncomfortable. **But for the convenience of saying yes we make a great deal more of an inconvenience of the rest of our life activities.**

Stand in front of a mirror and practice saying no. Be nice, be assertive, and be polite. But be sure of your words and of your decision. When you say no believe it yourself. Mean it. Leave no room for someone to push you into changing your mind.

Practice saying no when you know you are going into a situation where there will be someone making demands of you. Say no and be guilt free about it because saying yes takes you into the vicious circle of putting you under pressure and damaging your confidence.

When you do say yes, let it be to things that are of some value to your life and to others lives. Then your yes will really matter and will really be appreciated.

10. Share your thoughts

Decide that you will not take this task of life changing action on alone.

Share your plans or your ideas with those around you who care about you.

Don't go gossiping about it to people who will make a joke of it and devalue your actions. Talk about it to those who matter in your life.

By doing this you will gain their support and their understanding. They will also be willing to help. So don't be afraid to let these people into your change process by asking them for their help if you need it.

Asking for help is a very brave thing to do.

Maybe having a close friend on board will help you stick to your plans, once you have shared you plans, then you have an obligation to complete them. This will be a reminder that will keep you motivated and keep you going forward.

LETS RECAP ON THE TEN STEPS TO BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE.

1. you will look at how you spend your time.
2. You will create your picture of your ideal life.
3. You will deal with all your excuses and give yourself permission to take action.
4. You will decide your priorities.
5. You will decide how to deal with the things you no longer want to do.
6. You will decide on the three most important things in your life.
7. You will be taking things one step at a time.
8. You will no longer feel guilty.
9. You will learn to say 'No'.
10. You will share your thoughts on your plan to change.

SO WHAT NEXT

GOOD LUCK YOU ARE NOW ON A JOURNEY THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR IDEAL BALANCED LIFE.

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