

Work Life Balance Toolkit

What is it?	When to use it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A simple guide to having a more balanced approach to your work and life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In personal development planning sessions
How to use it?	What does it achieve?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use it yourself or with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A more holistic approach to personal development

The Balanced Wheel of Life.

This is a simple tool to help you evaluate your own life, how it is and how you want it to be. Each spoke on the wheel has 10 points, first rate each area of your life, based on the categories around the wheel (you can change these if you think others are more suitable) from 1 to 10. Mark the appropriate point on the spoke, working from the middle outwards. If you score 10 on all areas your life is perfectly balanced and exactly how you want it! Now join up the pointers to find out what your wheel looks like.

Draw your wheel now, you can update this as often as you want.

Ask yourself:

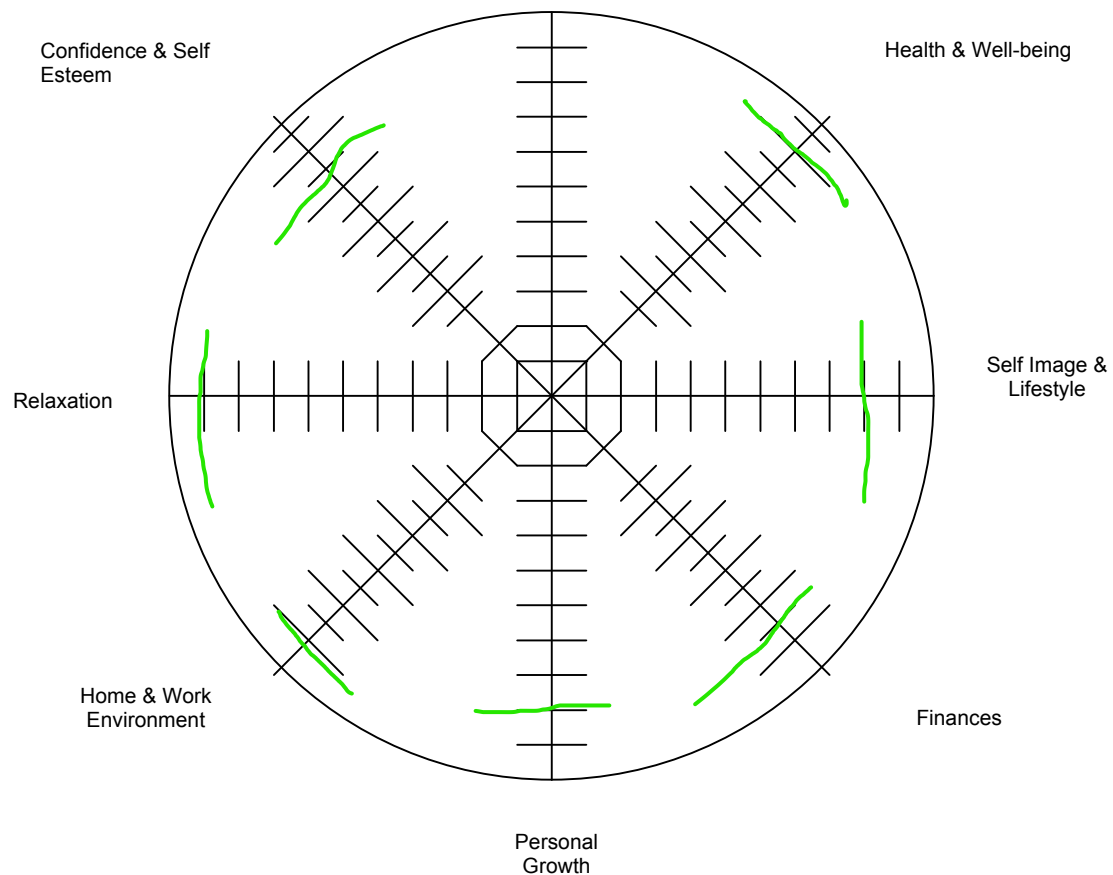
- Why are some areas of your life scoring more highly than others?
- What would you like to change?
- What are you prepared to do to get the life you want?
- How could you bring your life into balance?
- When do you want to achieve this by?

The next exercise on Goals will help you define what you really want, by when and how you can get it.

The Balanced Wheel

Simply mark on this wheel the extent to which each aspect of your life is how you want it to be with the centre of the wheel representing 0% and the outside circumference representing 100%.

Next, join all the marks together to see where you need to do some more balancing work



Goals

Less than 3% of people plan their goals, not only in work but in their life in general. If you plan a balanced, challenging and desirable future, give it sufficient detail and commit to work towards it can achieve whatever you want. This has been proven time and time again by successful business and sports professionals. Ever read a miracle survival or recovery story its almost certain they planned their future in a vivid and realistic way.

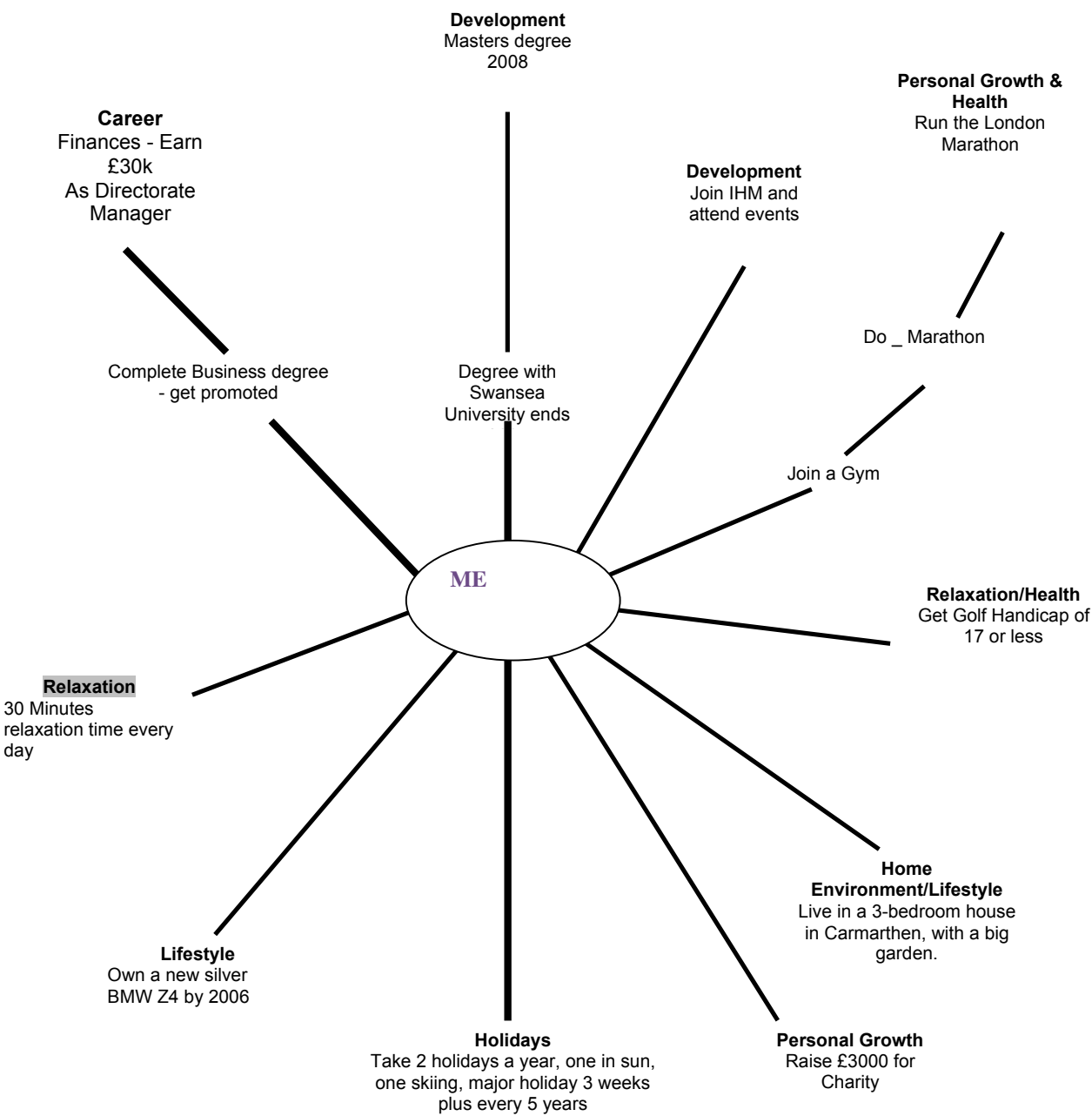
This exercise is all about you! You can complete it in several ways:

Written – Start with 'ME' written in the middle of a blank sheet of paper (the bigger the better). Draw out lines to each area of life that you want to achieve (the categories on the Wheel exercise might be a good start and I guarantee you will soon come up with your own. If you want to earn £100,000 a year by 2007 write it down, do this for each area of your life. I have included an example.

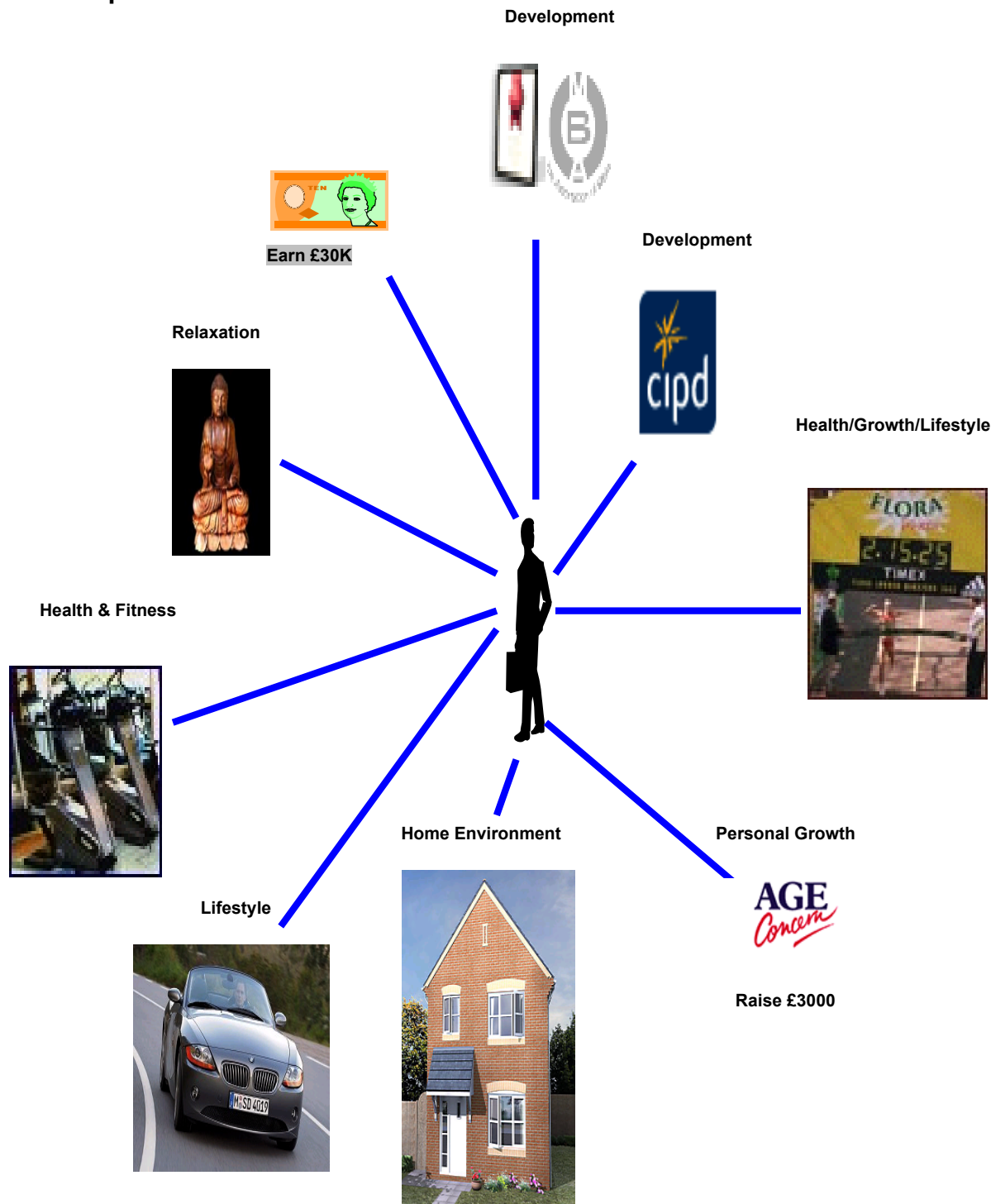
Pictures – if you are an artist draw you might literally be able to draw your perfect life, for the rest of us pictures from magazines or the internet will do just as well. This time get a picture of yourself and put it in the middle of a sheet of paper. Now find pictures of the things you want (Ideal house, sports car, job, the gym you want to go to 3 times a week etc). Make sure you link each one to you picture in the centre with a bold line to demonstrate your commitment to achieving the goal. If you have the space draw make the line indicate how far in the distance you want to achieve each goal. Similarly if you know what the interim steps you need to take to get to your ultimate goal look like include them along the route. Make the picture as bright and desirable as you can, review it and amend it often to reflect what you want now – it will change as you change. I have included the example from above but in pictorial form.

Tape – a third alternative is to make a tape of you describing your ideal future. Go through the same steps as above but this time describe in great detail what you want. Try varying your voice and convey the excitement achieving your goals will give you. Replay the tape regularly and record new sections, as you need to.

Example Written Goal Plan



Example Pictorial Goal Plan



Relaxation Techniques

manage stress is a part of modern life. The pace of change gets ever quicker in both work and our personal lives. We live in the 'information age' and so are bombarded with more information than ever before with demands on us to respond more quickly. Taking time out to let your mind make sense of the day is essential. A few techniques are listed below to help you find a method that works for you.

General Health & Well Being

Exercise

Any exercise is good for you! Just 20 minutes a day or a 30-40 minute session 3 times a week will do wonders not only for your fitness level but also your mental alertness too. If you need the motivation and support of a class try joining a local gym. Activities such as Yoga have excellent stress reducing properties.

Drink Water

You might be thinking what has this got to do with relaxation. Most people are dehydrated; you need to drink at least 2 litres of water a day to function well. Only water is water! Being hydrated will help you to cope better with pressure and if linked to fitness will improve your physical stamina and mental capacity.

Nutrition

You are what you eat. Endocrinologists tell us that our entire body replaces itself every 2-3 years. If we don't provide our bodies with all the nutritional building blocks they need to do this properly our bodies will replace themselves the best they can with what they've got building in errors and shortages that get worse over time. Take enough time and care to give yourself good food. A balanced diet with plenty of fresh and raw fruit and vegetables as well as cooked food is recognised to be part of a healthy diet. You might also think about taking a good quality multi-vitamin once a day as a supplement to what you eat, many people find this helps too.

Balance

Another important concept is balance, you have already seen the balanced wheel which looks at all of your life. Think about balance in what you eat, drink and do. Just about anything is good for you in moderation!

Keys to Relaxation: Quick, Simple Exercises to Help Keep Stress in Check

Can't spare a minute for you to relax? The truth is you can't afford not to do so! Experts have discovered that taking time to relax on a regular basis — even if it is only a few moments — is vital in order to keep stress under control. Relaxation will reduce your overall levels of tension and distress while helping you maintain a more positive, healthy outlook on life. Simply put, it's good for your heart, your soul, and your sanity! There are a variety of proven relaxation techniques that can be done almost anytime, anywhere, in a matter of moments. Try some of these simple exercises to see which ones work best for you:

Brief Relaxation

Muscle tension is most commonly experienced in the back of the neck and shoulders. One easy way to get rid of such tension is to tighten the neck and shoulders, holding for 5-10 seconds before releasing. Repeat this exercise several times.

You can also release tension in your shoulders by gently rotating them, first in one direction and then another. To release tension in your neck, slowly roll your head from side to side.

Stress Walk

The next time you have built up a lot of physical tension or are about to enter a difficult situation, take a walk. Walk around your desk at work, up and down stairs, down a hallway, around the block, or back and forth in your living room. A walk — even a short one — can give you a much needed "time out," releasing muscle tension and allowing more oxygen to enter your brain and body. It can be amazingly effective.

Time-out Relaxation

When you are caught up in a difficult situation and need to calm yourself down, try this: First, push yourself away from your desk, or move away from whatever is causing you to be upset. Then, close your eyes, take a deep breath, exhale, and move back again. This brief "time out" can help release your physical and mental tension, providing a diversion that can help you return to the problem with a better mind set.

The Relaxing Sigh

1. Sit or stand up straight.
2. Let out a deep sigh of relief as the air rushes out of your lungs.
3. Don't think about inhaling; just let the air come back in naturally.
4. Repeat this procedure 8-10 times whenever you feel the need for it, and experience the feeling of relaxation.

Slow Breathing for Calming

Many people find deliberate slow breathing to be very calming and especially helpful before making a speech or when encountering an unpleasant situation. Concentrate on breathing slowly and calmly, thinking of your slow breathing as soothing your entire body. Leaving your breath out for a longer period than normal can also be very soothing.

Brief Scanning Relaxation

- As you breathe in, scan your face, neck, shoulders, and arms for tension.
- As you breathe out, let your muscles relax, and allow the tension to slip away.
- As you breathe in, observe your chest, lungs, and stomach for tension.
- As you breathe out, allow your muscles to relax, letting any tension slip away.
- As you breathe in, search for tension in your legs, hips, and feet.
- As you breathe out, feel any remaining tension flow from your body. Continue breathing deeply for one to five minutes, enjoying the overall sense of relaxation.

Breathing Exercise

- Assess for yourself how easy or difficult you find it to relax.
- Become aware of the difference between being alert and being relaxed.
- Gain access to your subconscious mind.
- Find yourself a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down.
- Uncross your legs and arms (creates your legs and arms creates physical tension).

*Note: Physical tension creates mental tension
 Mental tension creates physical tension*

- Put one hand on your stomach area, just above the navel.
- Check the main tension points and consciously relax them:
- Unclench your teeth
- Drop your shoulders
- Open your hands
- Close your eyes and just be aware of the position of your body in the chair/on the bed. Concentrate on your head for a moment, then on your arms, the trunk of your body, your legs. Listen to your breathing for about 10 breaths. Do not do anything. It is unimportant whether you breathe quickly or slowly, just listen to it.
- Now begin to take deeper breaths. As you breathe in, make sure you breathe in through your belly. If you are doing this properly, the hand on your stomach will rise with your expanding belly. As you exhale, your belly area will deflate and your hand will sink down with it.
- Take 10 deep breaths through your belly and for each one hold your breath for a count of 5, then exhale again.
- Let your breathing go back to normal again.
- Gently tighten all your muscles, as you release the tension, open your eyes, you should feel physically calm now.

Mental Holiday Exercise

- Try this exercise when you are reasonably relaxed anyway.
- Find yourself a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Start off by remembering a suitcase. In your mind see it sitting on the bed, ready packed. As you are looking at the open suitcase, repeat the word 'holiday' to yourself. Get into the mood, hype yourself up. Set the scene in your mind and feel the elation of going off to your favourite holiday spot. Money is no object, in fact, the more expensive the better.
- You are ready to go. Close your suitcase. Now you are at the airport, station or seaport boarding your plane, train or ship.
- You have arrived at your holiday destination. It is superb and exactly as you would like it to be. In your mind look at everything in detail – the mountains, beach, trees, countryside, whatever you have chosen. See the sights, feel the sensations and hear the sounds. Be right there involved in your daydream, make it as pleasurable as possible.
- When you want to get back, just gently tense your muscles, relax them again and open your eyes – leave that smile on your face it suits you.

Being Quiet

Being quiet once or twice a day is really important in our busy lifestyles. The other name for being quite is meditation and it can take many forms. In principle it simply means setting aside 20-30 minutes quiet time for you. You can use the breathing exercises to get you started, sit or lie in any position you feel comfortable and let your mind go blank. Don't worry if you find yourself thinking of things from the day it's just your mind making sense of the day. Gently try to bring yourself back to a calm state each time this happens. If you do this for 20 –30 minutes (to start with you might want to try just 5-10 minutes) you should find you feel more relaxed about the day and regain your energy. You will probably find that the solutions to problems also appear as you give yourself time and permission to think. Some people like to add a "mantra" - a repeated phrase either spoken out loud or silently in your head. The most famous ones are probably the 'ohm' noise made by Buddhist Monks (this creates a resonance in your chest which helps you to relax) or religious prayers, which are another form of meditation. You can make up your own "mantra" that is meaningful for you. Examples of silent internal "mantras most people seem to like are:

"Sharing" – repeated gently and silently in your head with eyes closed – if your thoughts drift off to something else, which they probably will, don't worry, when you realise, just gently bring your mind back and begin repeating the word quietly in your head.

On the in breath – "I am". On the out breath "peace" visualising peace and relaxation flowing down your spine and into your body. Again if your thoughts drift off to something else, which they probably will, don't worry, when you realise, just gently bring your mind back and begin repeating the phrase quietly in your head on the in and out breath.

You can also sit quietly and reflect on questions you want answered. Doing this will help your mind focus on what you want to achieve. Meditation is a very powerful and

personal tool, you should experiment to find a system that works for you. Some people find adding music, candles and pictures in a more relaxing environment can also help. It is also possible to buy various meditation tapes and CD.