

SNEAK PEEK!

CONTENTS • PROLOGUE EXCERPT
SAMPLE CHAPTERS • THE BUZZ
MEET THE AUTHOR

Balancing Act

Reflections, Meditations, and Coping Strategies
For Today's Fast-Paced Whirl

Adele Ryan McDowell, Ph.D.

SEE WHAT BALANCING ACT HAS TO OFFER

Five fab chapters

- Start, Stop and Stalled
- Monkey Minds and Tender Hearts
- Easy Does It
- Natural Rhythms
- Helpful Strategies

New Yorker cartoons like this one...



"What's the next best medicine?"

Terrific quotes, for example ...

*"I try to take it one day at a time,
but lately several days have attacked
me at once."* Ashleigh Brilliant

From the Prologue

Life is fast and crazy-busy. We all need balance just so we can stay afloat and find neutral. Both physically and psychologically, when we maintain balance, we don't tip over. We are less reactive to whatever comes our way.

Remember Louis Pasteur, the father of pasteurization? When Pasteur was very ill, he reasoned that if he could find balance, he could heal. He instructed his lab assistants to go to the river and bring him buckets of sun-warmed sand. He recalled that, as a child, he had accompanied his mother to the river when she did the family's washing. Pasteur would play contentedly with the sand on the riverbank; everything was right in his world. When his assistants returned with the requested buckets of sand, Pasteur plunged his hands and feet into the sand to consciously recall the childhood experiences that had brought him peace and contentment. By replicating these experiences as an adult, he not only regained balance, he healed.

Research in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, or mind-body medicine, has taught us that all parts of us—mind, body, and spirit—are connected

Balancing act

and influence one another. Emotions, thoughts, bodily sensations, and yearnings of the soul work hand in hand within us. It stands to reason that we would need a holistic approach if we are to find balance.

In this book you will find reflections, meditations, and coping strategies grounded in psychoneuroimmunology, cognitive-behavioral, transpersonal, and positive psychologies, and big-picture spirituality to help take you through the day— and even the night.

Urban legend

A woman is in her yard, and a well-fed, well-cared-for dog—complete with tags—approaches her. She pats the dog's head; the dog follows her into her house, walks down the hall, and finds a corner, where it promptly takes a nap. After an hour or so, the dog wakes up, stretches, and goes to the door, waiting to be let out of the house.

This event repeats itself for a few days. Growing more and more curious about this dog, the woman of the house decides to write a note, which she attaches to the dog's collar. The note reads, "Your dog comes to my house every afternoon to take a nap."

The next day the dog returns with a note attached to his collar. This note says, "This dog comes from a house with six children, two of whom are under three years of age. He is trying to catch up on his sleep. Can I come with him tomorrow?"

Flight grounded

You have been climbing up this staircase, pursuing your intention, every day. All too often it seems long— very long. Never ending, in fact. Sometimes you think reaching the top seems impossible. When does it end? Why does this ongoing push, day after day, seem so difficult and exhausting? Yet you seem riveted to your pursuit. It is part of you; you are part of it. It cannot be ignored or dismissed. Turning back never seems like an option. So you continue, even when each step feels heavy and burdensome.

But sometimes you get stuck on the landing. You put one foot on the next step and nothing happens. You can't go any farther. You're stalled. There is no movement; your feet are wearing shoes of stone. You are stuck on the landing between flights.

Your flight has been grounded. The landing feels confining; there is no progress, no motion. You feel as though there is no air; you are having difficulty breathing. What's the hold-up? Why this inactivity? Who instigated this inertia? You are stymied and perplexed.

BALANCING ACT

Your mind is like a whirling dervish. You have moved
into panic. You beseech the gods, *Tell me what's going
on!*

And the gods do not answer, at least not immediately.

When nothing is
certain—
everything is
possible.

Margaret Atwood

Anchor points

What holds you? What keeps you grounded and tethered?

In today's world, there is much fast-paced changeability. Life seems to turn on a dime. Weeks vary; every day has a unique twist. As you routinely deal with the changes, variances, alterations, and reschedulings, what allows you to stay centered? How do you remain true to yourself?

If you do not have anchor points securely affixed to your routine, it is easier to lose your balance. There is nothing to ensure that you are grounded; you can easily be knocked off your center. Nothing is holding you or rooting you to your Best Self.

Anchor points provide those roots. They are regular routines that have become fully incorporated into your life. They are subjective by definition: What works for you may not work for me. Anchor points are anything that serves to balance and stabilize you. There can be the weekly phone call with a loved one, early morning walks with your neighbor, a class at the gym, reading, before bed, keeping a journal,

daily meditation, or prayer.

Anchor points reduce stress by providing a regular outlet by which you can physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually express yourself. They become fixed points of stability; they provide safety and security. When your life is totally upside down or you feel as if you are trudging through the desert with little hope of reaching the oasis, anchor points can help keep you sane. They anchor you in the here and now and deepen your connection with yourself.

Today, identify your anchor points and recommit to incorporating these grounding actions into your routine. To start, consider one anchor point commitment for 10 to 15 minutes a day—that's it. This daily action can make a huge difference.

If this idea inspires you, you might consider extending your commitment to yourself and try this for 21 days—the time it takes to create a new habit. Not only will you feel better, you will also have strengthened your self-esteem and self-confidence.

Practice is a seedbed of
miracles.

Michael Murphy

Resentments

Have you ever felt supreme resentment over another's action? How dare they do that to you, you of all people? You have always been there for them. You have sacrificed for them. You have rearranged your life for them. They have the unmitigated gall to ignore, hurt, or rebuff you. *How could they?*

Sound familiar? Such is the human condition when you feel resentful. More than likely you have been insulted or betrayed. You feel they only thought of themselves. You were not considered in the mix. It's a painful place to be.

Resentments can be enormous and searing; they also can be subtle little wounds that continuously dig into your ego. Your feelings are hurt. You may share your affronted feelings with others in an effort to be validated and proven right, or you may silently nurse them.

Interestingly, resentments come bearing a message. It's as if the grand hall of your psyche has been opened with pomp and

circumstance; the enormous trumpets are raised and sounded to herald the forthcoming proclamation. The communiqué is this: Resentments are signals that you are not being responsible for yourself.

“Not responsible,” you sputter. “I am *always* responsible.” Perhaps you are always responsible for and toward others. But the rub is, are you responsible for yourself? Have you stated your case, set your limits, created your boundaries, or contained your energies? Has there been a subcontext or a hidden agenda? Did you just give all of yourself away—again?

Resentments are potent reminders that you have not taken full responsibility for yourself, your needs, and your desires. Resentments have a hidden message—*Stand up for yourself*—that has yet to be identified, honored, or expressed.

Our resentments bind us to the person
with a cord stronger than steel.

Emmet Fox

Peel carrots, chop onions

It's the day-to-day faithfulness to yourself, your values, your family, and your work that gives continuity, substance, and foundation to your life. Without this sustained commitment, the steadying routine of life gets lost. There are no anchor points to ground the day.

It's important to remind yourself that even your most mundane daily tasks, performed consistently, are essential acts of fidelity. They serve as connective tissue. They help keep you, your family, community, office, school, and other assorted circles on an even keel. Your steadfastness, commitment, and ability to do as promised create trust.

You do what needs to be done, day in and day out. Everyday tasks come to be expected, and the regularity of your daily acts dilutes the significance of your actions.

Nonetheless, your day-to-day faithfulness serves as a gift of enormous dedication, care, and loyalty. Your daily acts foster connection, cohesion and

BALANCING ACT

commitment. They provide the comfort of routine and everyday ritual; they nurture peace of mind. The sum of your actions is greater than you realize:

You become the touchstone; you provide safety and security.

You are the ballast; you tender the steadying influence.

You are the beacon; you shine the light to refind home.

Take a minute to acknowledge your daily acts of faithfulness, and allow yourself to appreciate the difference you make.

The purpose of life is to
increase the warm heart.
Think of other people.
Serve other people
sincerely. No cheating ...

The Dalai Lama

Perfectly human

You're so hard on yourself. You frequently belittle and second-guess yourself. You didn't do this right. You forgot to say that. You review prior conversations and practice future ones in your head. You see every gaffe, misstep, and wrong word as an unbearable breach. You sometimes embarrass yourself with an outburst or, even worse, silence. You hold yourself to exceedingly high standards. You never measure up to your expectations. You expect perfection; you get humanness.

By definition, being human means that we are fallible. We are also vulnerable. We are not impervious to slings and shots. We are not made of steel and concrete; we are magnificently flesh and bone, muscle and tissue. We are sensate beings; we can see, taste, hear, and touch the experiences of life. Our humanness is our connective tissue; it's what connects you with me. We are bonded by the experiential, the trial and error, and the ups and downs of life.

Because being perfect leaves no room for

error, you can't make a mistake and learn from it. You can't earn wisdom from your experiences. Perfection does away with the smudges and shadows. There is no coloring outside the lines with perfection. Perfection calls for a definitive response; you are either perfect or you're not; there is no in-between. Perfection is linear, black-and-white, all-or-none. There is no wiggle room in perfect.

Mastery, however, offers a spectrum of possibilities. It breaks out of the confines of right or wrong, perfect or not perfect. Mastery invites you to try many different ways, build on miscalculations, missteps, and mistakes. Mastery breaks out of the two-dimensional box of perfection and opens possibilities for all sorts of new creations. Mastery invites your perfectly human self to come in and play with all the colors.

When you make the world
tolerable for yourself, you make
the world tolerable for others.

Anaïs Nin

Come sit

Come sit. Come sit by the babbling brook. Come sit under the coolness of the trees, where the sunlight is soft and diffuse and becomes green-gold.

Take a moment and allow yourself to rest in this tranquil place. The only sound is that of the burbles and gurgles from the brook. Everything serves to deepen your sense of release. Everything serves to take you deeper and deeper into a place of relaxation.

Breathe in the silence. Breathe in the greenness. Breathe in the cool, shaded waters and allow yourself to be refreshed and renewed by the comfort of this place.

With a moment just like this, you can create peace. Peace begins with small moments ...

... when you stop.

... when you allow your
breath to lengthen.

... when you allow yourself
to be held in stillness.

BALANCING ACT

... when you drop
into silence.

... when you release
thought, expectation, or
anticipation clouding your
mind.

... when you rest in the
rhythms of nature.

Peace begins moment by moment.

Nature, time, and
patience are the three
great physicians.

Chinese proverb

Invite your demons to tea

This wonderful exercise is from the Buddhist tradition. Imagine this, if you will: You head to the special gourmet market, high-end bakery, and flower shop. You buy the most sumptuous of delicacies and the most extravagant arrangement of early spring flowers. Once home, you unearth your finest table linens, which you wash and iron to perfection. You polish your silver until it gleams. You reach into the recesses of your cabinets and carefully withdraw your most delicate porcelains. You wash them in hot, soapy water and dry them mindfully with a hand towel. You set your table with all of your finery, creating a beautiful and inviting tableau.

You shower and dress, specially preparing yourself for this very important occasion, an occasion that requires the very best of everything you have to offer. With one final look in the mirror, you know you are completely ready.

You walk to the very back of your home, where there is a large wooden door with a small grated opening. As you approach the door, you

BALANCING ACT

can already smell the putrid, offensive odors and hear the snarling, banging, spitting, and other off-putting noises. You are quite nervous. You take a very deep breath. You open a series of locks, swing open the heavy door and invite your demons to follow you into the dining room for a tea party.

You are expecting your table to be trashed. But you are surprised. Your oversized demons sit carefully on your small-to-them chairs and place napkins in their laps. They are delighted to be included. You have actual conversations; you feed them sweets. You meet some of your deepest fears in these hairiest, most foul-smelling creatures. Who knew? You begin to feel some compassion; there's an inkling of comprehension. With some understanding, they really aren't so slimy, awful, and loathsome after all.

This month, will you invite your demons for tea?

Enlightenment is not
about imagining figures of
light but
of making the darkness
conscious.

C. G. Jung

Healing star

You are having one of those days. Everything has turned sour. You are at a loss for what to do next. You have little energy and little motivation to take the next step.

Try this: See yourself walking along a path, whatever comes to your mind easily. Now imagine that as you walk, you look down and see a tiny green metallic star—a perfectly shaped five-pointed star. Its shape and its color give you pause. You find this star uplifting for some unknown reason.

You bend down and pick it up. You hold it in your hand and smile at this mysterious occurrence in your not-so-pleasant day. It all feels a little magical, and today, of all days, you could be open to some magic.

As soon as you have this thought, the star begins to spin and expand. It becomes the size of a Ping-Pong ball and hovers at the midpoint of your breastbone. Clearly, this star has found you for a reason today.

Intuitively, you know what to do. You allow your breath to deepen and you focus on the rotating

BALANCING ACT

green star. As you breathe in, you take in the green energy of the star. You find it calming, soothing, and relaxing. As you breathe out, you release tightness and tension, pain and discomfort. You settle into a rhythm of deep star-focused breathing and discover that the more time you spend in this endeavor, the better you feel. You find yourself feeling lighter, more energetic and more balanced. The day has recovered some of its sweetness.

Today, consider a little magic, and take in some healing star energy.

Alice laughed. "There is no use trying," she said, "one can't believe impossible things." "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll

And a few **MORE SNIPPETS** to share with you ...

Runaway brain

Your body is desperate for rest. Maybe you get a sliver of sleep, or maybe the engines have already revved up and you can hear the faint roar in the distance. It is the sound of your runaway brain, like a fully loaded freight train hurtling through the night; it is beginning to pick up speed and momentum as it roars into your awakened head.

Mr. Toad's wild ride

Are you stressed? In fact, are you so stressed that you feel you have created a new, high-intensity, off-the-Richter-scale level of stress? Have you been stretched out of your comfort zone to catch fly balls from the universe? Do you feel pelted by incoming, not-so-charming surprises, like snowballs from hell? Do you feel pressed to do more, be more, accept more than you ever thought possible?

An emotional hangover

Ever have one of those weeks when there is palpable, anger-inciting tension between you and a family member? Or when you have had a crushing misunderstanding with one of your dearest friends? Or when an incident at work has you mumbling obscenities under your breath and double-checking your pension benefits?

Got stress?

Do you have a monkey mind that has run amok? Is there lots of chatter ricocheting around your cranium? Is there so much clamor and conversation inside your head that it's standing room only? Like the deli counter, do you need to take a number to discern which inner voice has taken over the microphone?

HEAR THE BUZZ?

The number one *need* in every society is the ability to detach from the roller coaster of life. The reflections and meditations in *Balancing Act* speak to the soul and remind us to take time to smell the roses. Herein you will find one path to enrich your journey.

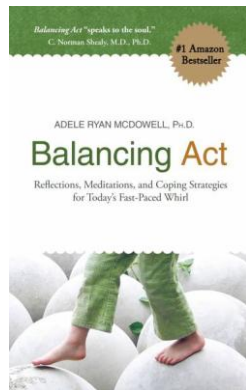
C. Norman Shealy, M.D., Ph.D.

President, Holos Institutes of Health
Professor Emeritus of Energy Medicine
President Emeritus
Holos University Graduate Seminary

This book is well worth reading, but it is also great just to leave where you can find it when you want a quick answer or perspective on something important in your life. It is delightful and has wisdom for the special issue on which you need a quick fix on balance and reality. It has a great spirit and can lift you just with the words used.

Dr. Frank Lawlis

Author of *Mending the Bond*,
The IQ Answer, and *The PTSD Breakthrough*



Balancing Act contains many meaningful and insightful comments, which can help to inform you and inspire change.

Bernie Siegel, M.D.

*Author of 365 Prescriptions For the Soul
and 101 Exercises For the Soul*

Adele McDowell's sense of humor and expertise as a psychotherapist take you into the world of smiling at yourself and shaking your head in disbelief simultaneously. How can life be so simple and so complex at the same time? She takes you to a new level of understanding the hows, whats, and whys of life in an entertaining and informative manner.

Read it and recognize yourself described page by page as you have never before been on display. This is one book that you will read multiple times, enjoying the view even more with each reading.

Carol Ritberger, Ph.D.

*Author of What Color Is Your Personality and
Healing Happens with Your Help ...
Understanding the Hidden Meaning Behind
Illness*

Meet the author

Adele Ryan McDowell, Ph.D., is a psychologist, teacher, and writer who came to her current place in life through the frequent and not-so-subtle prodding of the gods. She likes looking at life through the big view finder and is a perpetual student who believes in the power of an open heart, and a good laugh.

Dr. McDowell is a psychotherapist with more than 30 years' experience; a teacher of meditation, intuition development, and psychospiritual issues; an international workshop facilitator; and energy healer. Adele was the director of outpatient treatment at Liberation Clinic, a substance abuse clinic in Stamford, CT. She was founder/director of The Greenheart Center, a holistic, psychotherapeutic, and psycho-educational center in Stamford, Connecticut; creator of Faithwalk™, A Psychospiritual Approach to Transformation; and founder/director of the Institute for the Study of Symbolic and Shamanic Energies.

She is the author of the Amazon best-selling *Balancing Act: Reflections, Meditations, and Coping Strategies for Today's Fast-Paced Whirl*. She is a contributing author to the best-selling Shift Awareness anthologies, *2012: Create Your Own Shift* and *The Sacred Shift: Co-creating Your Future in a New Renaissance* and *Love and Oneness, an Abundance in Manifesting* book. Adele's next book is *Making Peace with Suicide*.

Adele -- a Texan by birth, upbringing, and pioneering spirit -- lives in Connecticut where you will often find her driving along the highways and byways, singing loudly in her car.

You can learn more about Adele, her writing, and her thinking at www.adeleryanmcdowell.com

Visit

www.AdeleRyanMcDowell.com

for more writing, beauty, and possibilities.



When you visit the website,
check out our new blog,

Adele and the Penguin:

making sense

of an upside-down world

