

## ***Climb Off Dead Horses: Changing to a Life of Balance***

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People are transfixed with global dangers and uncertainties facing them. War and terrorist bombings have followed the aftermath of 9/11. Death has never been so real or imminent. This has resulted in a burning desire on the part of John and Jane Q. Public to “live it while you have it”—lead a more meaningful life. But to thousands of frustrated people, what does “a more meaningful life” mean?

### **Your Quest for a Meaningful Life**

An old American Indian proverb says: “If the horse you are riding drops dead, it’s a good time to dismount.” Behaviors, attitudes and habits that are counter-productive to meaningful living are dead horses and keep you from achieving a diverse and varied lifestyle. Much as you may not want to sit stupidly on a dead horse, often you do just that, kicking Old Paint and screaming for the beast to be up and moving.

Dead horses are made up of the life patterns you’ve established that do not allow you to reach your greatest potential, establish the best relationships possible and find your greatest peace. You tend to stay on those horses because your fear of the unknown is a worse feeling than what you feel sitting on a dead horse.

It is important in making the transition from a dead horse to a new steed to look at those around you who can potentially offer support. It is also important that you open yourself to the wisdom and insight around you. Don’t hesitate to ride double for awhile if someone offers a lift. Mentors and the search for new, better paths come in many different ways, at many times.

### **The Danger of a Dead Horse**

Many of us tiptoe through life to arrive safely at the door of life. We procrastinate and put off until tomorrow rather than confront today. We sit on dead horses that aren’t life threatening or crippling but seem acceptable because they only deal with, say, boredom or a small curtailment of personal growth or a tiny denial of pleasure.

Living life as if you are going to live forever is the worst possible waste of time. If I have gained any wisdom in my years on earth, it is to know that waking each day with the sense of your own mortality can open great possibilities. Put more bluntly, you are going to die. You have a small snatch at life and only you can make that grab. Live as though you might die any moment. Don’t leave anything to chance and don’t leave anything unsaid.

Living within a box that does not allow exploration and full happiness is as dead a horse as can be found. It's so easy to deceive even yourself that it isn't a dead horse. In doing so, you present a horse to the world that appears alive, but in your deepest soul, you know is dead:

- lifeless, loveless, emotionless relationships.
- professions that bring money but not contentment.
- activities that are acceptable or expected but do not excite you.

You can live your greatest dreams—feel the strongest emotions possible—connect into powerful, meaningful relationships—have exhilarating experiences—come to understand and love yourself—if you have the courage to lift your leg over the dead corpse of your horse and seek a new steed. Only you, not the world that observes you, knows where your dead horses lie and what you need to change in order to have a truly balanced, meaningful life.

It is when you pursue balance that you gain control over your own life. You learn to say “no” when you are overburdened, and you seek what you really need.

### **The Search for Balance**

Balance is so much more than dividing time between work and play and redistributing activities. Bringing life into acceptable proportions is only a baby step in the search for balance.

Balance does not simply mean shifting your time frames and allotting a bit more time here and taking a tad there. Balance which comes from the soul and spirit involves a journey that truly explores how you develop and use your emotions. The pilgrimage to balance looks at the value you put on your body's well-being and your ability to be a true participant in community.

The journey asks you to move inside self, not only to evaluate and re-form your ethics and morals, but also to assign ways to practically demonstrate them on a daily level. True balance asks you to be a verb, action person and not a noun, state-of-being person.

Balance offers a release from stress but assigns the task of organizing your life and understanding that from order comes freedom. Balance advocates seeking new knowledge and evaluating what you already know.

Balance encourages you to play, joyfully, like a child. The words “spontaneous” and “abandonment” take on new meaning as you reach toward an untried depth of happiness. The word “fun” ceases to be a frivolous term and becomes a life-seeking achievement of great merit.

### **Living Fearlessly**

Just as you learn to play with abandonment, you learn to be fearless in approaching life. Auntie Mame's words, “Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death,” takes on greater meaning.

Fear of failure dims as you began to experiment outside of boxes you have built in your life. You know that life is a series of new beginnings, and no matter what happens, you can always take another crack at life.

Family takes on new significance, offering greater rewards—and asking more commitment. You find ways to give your children the great gift of your time. You discover that leadership rests in everyone. To lead well, to be a powerful role model, is within your grasp, and the natural result of a balanced life.

### **You Are in Control**

You have massive energy and power to decide how you live your life: where your emphasis is; how your time is spent; and what kind of people you bring into, or cast out of, your life. You learn to make major decisions with ease and chart your own path in life. You come to realize, on a very deep level, that no one determines your life but you.

If you are a person that sees your parents or childhood as creating your present negative life, you are sitting on a dead horse. But it is a dead horse you can climb off of any time you want.

Broken hearts and crippling experiences, as bad as they are, are only truly, forever bad if you continue to sit on that dead horse. Other people are not always the cause of your problem—sometimes it is your reaction to that person's actions.

There is support and knowledge all around you to help you make the transition to a healthy horse.

### **Woman on a Dead Horse**

My best friend died at the age of 42 from colon cancer.

A woman that young does not usually die of a disease like that. I was the one who entered her into the hospital for the biopsy, and while she was still sedated, the doctor told me she had only a limited time to live.

To this day I remember that I felt as if a huge hammer had hit me in the stomach. It was totally unbelievable, and yet less than a year later I was with her when she died in the same hospital.

She always told me that Ben had killed her. Ben was her boss, and indeed her life in that office was a daily routine of belittling and harassing—an atmosphere of fear. Sharon sat on a dead horse of great despair and stress, and yet she repeatedly refused to climb off. Sometimes I thought she'd been brainwashed. Certainly it was evident to me that Sharon did not control her own life. She had handed the reins to other people.

Sharon often talked of how Ben “stressed her out.” The reality is that no person or happening can cause stress. It is your reaction that creates the stress. Five people experiencing the same circumstance will react in five different ways, each with a different level of stress.

Sharon had conditioned herself accept that stress. Alternate solutions for Sharon might have been an attempt to open serious communication with Ben, seek others to confront Ben or simply quit her job.

But climbing off her dead horse seemed an insurmountable task to Sharon.

### **Climb Off Dead Horses**

You have it within your power to create the best of all possible lives—or you can let opportunities pass you by and allow negative forces take over.

The world today is one that is filled with uncertainties. But with motivation and persistence, the horses in your stable—and especially the ones you choose to ride—can be healthy ones, leading you to the happy, fulfilling life you deserve.