

March Theme

Balance: The Practice of Perspective

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Books

- *The Secret of the Shadow: The Power of Owning Your Story*, by Debbie Ford
- *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, by Wayne Muller

Movies

- *Silver Linings Playbook*
- *Koyaanisqatsi* (Hopi word for 'life out of balance')
- *Inside Out*
- *Fern Gully*

Music

- **Return Again**
Cover by Green Pastures Baptist Church:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qrQQ-ZX3BA>
- **Dona Nobis Pacem (musical and visual meditation)**
Music by Mark Miller
(Honoring the experience of being balanced and at peace.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZ41dj5x4MA>

Videos & Podcasts

- Desperately Seeking Symmetry, Radiolab Podcast
<https://www.kcrw.com/newsculture/shows/radiolab/desperately-seeking-symmetry>
- Oscar Winning Cartoon - must watch...to the very end
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wJj58aLvdQ>

Children's Books/Stories

- 'Parachuting Cats to the Rescue', a true story
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/session10/story1>

QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

There is peaceful
There is wild
I am both at the same time
~ *Nayyirah Waheed*

Letting go helps us to live in a more peaceful state of mind and helps restore our balance. It allows others to be responsible for themselves and for us to take our hands off situations that do not belong to us.
~ *Melody Beattie*

The spiritual life is, in part, about seeing our lives as an invitation to the best party in town. Our challenge is to stay awake to that, to continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It's all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done. We are also called to look around and see all that has been given.
~ *Rev. Scott Tayler*

Work, love, and play are the great balance wheels of our being. ~ *Orison Swett Marden*

Balance is not better time-management, but better boundary-management.
~ *Betsy Jacobson*

Wrap your fingers around her wintered soul. ~ *Sub Rosa*

Dark and Light, Light and Dark

Jacqui James
Full text here:
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/5934.shtml>

We shape language and we are shaped by it. In our culture, white is esteemed. It is heavenly, sun-like, clean, pure, immaculate, innocent, and beautiful. At the same time, black is evil, wicked, gloomy, depressing, angry, sullen. Ascribing negative and positive values to black and white enhances the institutionalization of this culture's racism.

Let us acknowledge the negative connotations of whiteness. White things can be soft, vulnerable, pallid, and ashen. Light can be blinding, bleaching, enervating. Conversely, we must acknowledge that darkness has a redemptive character, that in darkness there is power and beauty. The dark nurtured and protected us before our birth...

The words black and dark don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. The words white and light don't need to be destroyed or ignored, only balanced and reclaimed in their wholeness. Imagine a world that had only light—or dark. We need both. Dark and light. Light and dark.

Balanced

Beyond the thoughts that keep us bound
fear
suffering
anger
love
we will fly
though it be fleeting
we savor
the height
while craving
the ground below
knowing
it takes both
to make
a soul
~ *Denel Kessler*

One of the truths we know is that we live in an enchanted universe. The up-there and down-here mingle, the earthly and the heavenly mirror each other. We have no choice but to continue to redeem the world, to save the world from our own selves. We are, ironically, the cause of the breaking and just might be the channel of healing. To make the world whole, we ourselves have to become healed, become whole. Our well-being and the world being well are linked together. To tend to our own inner lives is not selfishness; it is wisdom, it is essential [for the sake of the world].

~ *Omid Safi*



What Does It Mean to Be a People of Balance?

When we talk of balance, it's natural for calm and rest to be the first things that come to mind. There's no getting around it: many of us are tired. We're overworked, over-busy, over-committed. Striving and stress have become the badges we wear to prove that we are of worth. We are often so weighed down by responsibility and worry that it only takes one drop of something unexpected to tip us over. So, yes, we long for rest. Yes, we want less to manage and juggle. Yes, we need balance's reminder that a place of calm and peace is possible.

And yet, pointing us to peace and calm is not all that balance is about. Remembering this is at the center of this month's work. Indeed, there is no better month than March to help us embrace balance's *many* meanings.

Yes, balance allows us to catch our breath, but it's also about finding our center so we can end all our aimless wandering around.

For instance, take the religious holidays in March. [Lent](#) reminds us that balance is a place of reassessment, renewal, preparation, and even repentance. It honors the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his ministry and the path to the cross. The balance he sought in the desert was not that of restful escape, but that restorative re-centering. Balance got him ready, rather than simply offering him relief. [Passover](#) also puts its own spin on balance. It is a time to retell the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt after centuries of slavery. For it, balance is a matter of remembering, of pausing to put yourself back into a story that connects you with others and anchors you in a counter-cultural narrative. During Passover, the balance one finds is not that of calm but that of reconnection. There's also [Ostara](#), the Pagan celebration of the Vernal Equinox. It honors the balance of day and night, but more importantly it celebrates the way this balance is a tipping point on the way to Spring. It's a reminder that stillpoints are rarely still. They are a place of turning, a space where shifts happen and new life emerges. And finally, the Hindu holiday of [Holi](#) also needs to be held up, with its ritual of restoring one's belief in the power of good over evil. It's a reminder that balance and calm aren't just found by taking a break from life, but by trusting in its goodness once again.

March is also the month in which we honor many people who gave their lives to the cause of justice. The list is large: The [Selma–Montgomery March](#) happened March 21-25, 1965; Unitarian Universalist [James Reeb](#) was murdered on March 11, 1965; Unitarian Universalist [Viola Liuzzo](#) was murdered on March 25, 1965. March is Women's history month with its call to remember the long history and continuing work for Women's equality. Archbishop [Oscar Romero](#) was killed on March 24, 1980.

These anniversaries remind us that being a "people of balance" is often the opposite of keeping things calm. In order to move toward a balance of justice, we have to upset the current state of things. Oppressive systems need to be challenged and toppled. We need to sacrifice our calm and comfort, and instead "go all in." Achieving a balance of equality requires us to be purposefully off-balance with our culture, or as Martin Luther King Jr. said, we need people who are "maladjusted." Being out of sync with "the way things are" is the first step toward a better balance for all.

Add all this up and suddenly "balance" takes on a new meaning. Actually, it takes on *many* new meanings. The observances of March remind us that balance is not simply a destination, but also a place of invitation. It's not a static space of peace, as much as a stillpoint on which we pivot and turn to something new. It's not just about rest, but about resting up *for a journey*. Yes, balance allows us to catch our breath, but it's also about finding our center so we can end all our aimless wandering around. It's fine to think of balance by imagining the Buddha sitting peacefully under a tree, but we can't let that overshadow the image of a diver balancing way up there on her diving board, pausing to re-gain her composure and courage so she can leap and go "all in."

Another way to put all this is to ask, "What is your balance *for*?" Maybe instead of asking each other, "Have you found balance?" we need to ask "Where is your balance taking you?" Yes, balance sometimes can be an end in itself, but this month and its observances remind us that more often balance is a means to a greater end. In other words, maybe balance isn't the prize but the springboard. Maybe balance isn't the goal, but the source of strength that gets us where we need to go.

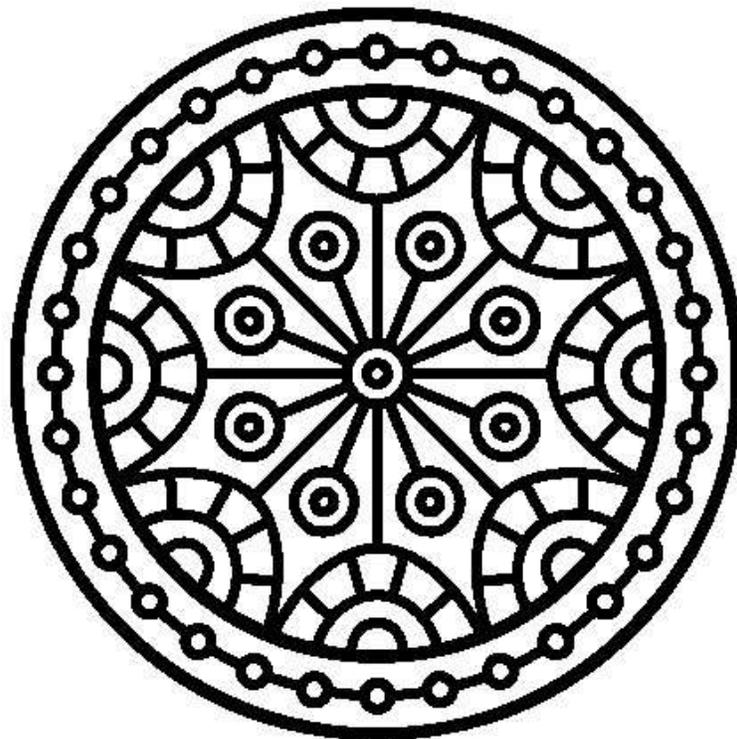
Which means that our most important questions this month might actually be, "Do you know where you're trying to get to?" and "Which kind of balance will help you along your way?"



Photo by [Sweet Ice Cream Photography on Unsplash](#)

KIDS' CORNER

Mandalas are sacred works of art in Tibetan Buddhism. It is usually in a circle and has a point at the middle, with repeating patterns moving out from the center. The shapes usually symbolize unity and harmony, in balance. The mandala form allows you to find peace and re-center yourself. Coloring it helps you reach a form of balance. Color this one and see if you feel more balanced afterward.



A REMINDER TO RE-BALANCE

Sometimes balance is as simple as remembering to take a moment to breathe. The problem is we're not so good at reminding ourselves and remembering on our own. In recognition of this, take a week this month and commit to the practice of a "daily pause" - or maybe a few daily pauses. You can keep it simple by setting an alarm on your phone reminding you to take a break. Or you can use one of the recommended apps below to help remind and guide you. You'll also need to decide what to do during your daily pauses. Some of us will step away and go for a walk or find a quiet place to be by ourselves. Others will keep it short and sweet, staying put and just taking 5 deep breaths. Still more will use the time for brief meditation. Figure out what works for you.

Here are some apps that might help:

- PauseAble: <http://www.pauseable.com>
- AURA: <https://www.aurahealth.io>
- Breathe: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/breathe-daily-breathing-reminders/id976954751?ls=1&mt=8>
- The Now: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/the-now-mindful-living/id347667121?mt=8>
- 7 Second Meditation: <http://www.7secondmeditation.com>



PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of balance means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. What if the problem is not about being busy and all those balls you're juggling? Could the balance you seek be about connecting who you are inside with how you use your time outside? Are you sure that you are overwhelmed, or just out of alignment?
2. As a kid, when did you have that feeling of everything being in perfect balance? Is that just a nice memory? Or might it be a guidepost to what you need in your life right now?
3. What happens when you sit quietly in a room? Do the voices you hear center and balance you? Or leave you off-balance and pulled off-center?
4. We struggle between our desire to save the world and savor the world. But what if it's really a matter of listening better to both of them? How is what you savor calling you to save or protect something? How are your efforts to save world asking you to get better at finding moments of personal balance and joy?
5. Psychologists say we need a balance of work, love and play. Which of these three legs needs more of your attention? Have you become a one or two-legged stool?
6. Are you trying too hard to make something work? Might balance for you be a matter of accepting defeat or finally letting it go?
7. Are you off-balance because you're in a tug-of-war? You do know that you're allowed to simply let go of the rope, right? What do you think would happen if you did?
8. Is it time to give up one of your passions so the other can fully live? Is trying to balance them all cutting you off from connecting fully with any one of them?
9. Are you out-of-balance because you've taken on too much or taken on too much *that is not really yours to do or fix*?
10. Is your life out of balance because you are taking on too much or because you *want* too much?
11. Do you really need better time-management? Or could better boundary-management be your true work?
12. Is time to toss balance to the side and go all in?
13. Are you trying to both hold on to and let go of someone at the same time?
14. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for March 2018.

2672 E Alluvial Ave
Fresno, CA 93720
www.uufresno.org
559.322.6146

JUSTICE CORNER

The young people are rising up and saying 'Not again!' Support them in this nationwide student-led movement, calling for gun reform.

<https://www.marchforourlives.com/>

Fresno March – Saturday, March 25, 1-4pm:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2023582074634563/>

In addition to showing up to support the youth, adults can also get involved with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America: <https://momsdemandaction.org/>