



LIFE BALANCE TRAINING Whole Person Integration

We are not one-dimensional people. A lot goes into making us who we are; because of this, we have all experienced conflicting voices, or factors, within ourselves. Life Balance Training (LBT) is a multifaceted approach to self and life management that integrates the major factors of the whole person and the world in which he or she lives mental or cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual.

LBT work helps you learn methods for balancing and expanding these factors of your life so that life's events and activities flow more smoothly and your relationships with self and others are healthier and more confident. In addition to the more familiar talk therapy of traditional therapies, LBT engages you in body awareness, trauma processing, creative activities, and nature, for example. The LBT approach is non conventional in this way.

Recognizing the influence of the psychologist Alfred Adler, the sociologist Robert Bellah, and the holistic homeopath George Vithoulkas, among others, LBT developed from my understanding of the human being. We are born, live, and die inseparably from the larger contexts of the physical, spiritual, political, and social influences of our world. We live in a dynamic environment that continuously affects our existence in many ways, requiring us to adjust to maintain a dynamic balance within ourselves and within our community. Besides functioning in relation to the outer world, we also respond to the needs and desires of our inner selves, which arise from our physical, emotional, spiritual, ethical, and mental sides.

On the basis of this definition of the human being, a simple concept of health emerges: A healthy individual operates effectively on the mental, emotional, and physical levels within, and deals effectively with the challenges of his or her inner and outer worlds.

Why Should I Consider Life Balance Training?

If anxiety, anger, depression or all three emotions trouble you often or for extended periods of time, one or more factors of your life may be out of balance. We all get angry, anxious, or depressed from time to time. When these emotions persist over weeks or months, they can reduce the satisfaction we get from ourselves and from our work, families, and creative activities.

When we notice ourselves eating more, partying more, or working more feverishly than normal, it might be time for Life Balance Training. Potentially abusive behavior may be distracting us from the circumstances in our lives. These behaviors and emotions also can be unconscious signs of being out of balance.

Sometimes when we ignore emotions or addictive behaviors, they can grow into more serious challenges, so it is wise to seek help with them as soon as you notice a persistent pattern. To face these patterns, you might benefit from Life Balance Training work.

LBT work is fluid and can be pursued at different times in your life: at crossroads, changing financial, work, or relationship circumstances, deaths and losses, or during periods when you feel you have stopped growing personally, or are growing so fast that you feel out of balance or stuck.

What Can Life Balance Training Do for Me?

You will likely develop in some of these ways through Life Balance Training work:

- Increase self knowledge, which can be applied creatively and practically to improve how you manage your life
- Recognize yourself and your choices as a major factor in the healing of your relationships and the nurturing of your life.
- Simplify decision-making in your life.
- Connect more with yourself and others, thus counteracting feelings of alienation, tension, and pain.
- Reduce poorly managed emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and sorrow.
- Improve physical health.
- Learn skills for applying the creative force of your emotions to flow more smoothly through life.

What Do We Do In Life Balance Training Sessions?

This work involves specific activities that allow you to assess the major factors of your life. A client usually comes with an uncomfortable pattern or situation that he or she would like to change, such as withdrawing from loved ones when upset or drinking to numb feelings, like rejection, jealousy, or anger. Sometimes, the client is experiencing a generalized malaise or just knows life could be better, but isn't.

Then we examine together how the pattern has surfaced throughout your life and what is aggravating it now. Sometimes a childhood family situation has influenced the development of behaviors and associated emotions that don't work for us now, but served us well as children. Other times, the circumstances of our current life are thorny.

Through this work, you begin to see how your mental and emotional factors are tied together, how they in turn affect the vitality of your physical body and the choices you make, and how you can use your spiritual side to mobilize the inner resources and answers so that the social interactive part of your life feels more connected rather than alienated.

The training is individualized, with men and women often favoring different adjustments to their current life management skills. Men, for example, sometimes seek to optimize one or two factors of the human experience first and then move on. Women might focus more synergistically, with simultaneous activity and work on each of the factors of their lives. Or it might be vice versa, depending on the individual.

In Life Balance Training sessions, a LBT therapist helps you mobilize your internal resources and those of your community for effective action. In this way, you can build both a strong self and a strong family or other form of community. To give you an idea about how this works, we'll look at the central issues that control you, the emotions that trigger poor behavior, the consequences to manage, and the mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social practices that might promote change.

What Conflicting Voices Will We Work On and How?

Life Balance Training synthesizes the following factors of human existence, which are often experienced as inner conflicts:

- **Cognitive/Mental:** We look at the system of beliefs about life formed through your experiences and what you have absorbed socially, exploring what you think about yourself, your work, and your relationships. This work allows us to discover cognitive mindsets that might produce beliefs such as “I am not good enough,” “I will always be abandoned,” or “People usually hurt each other.” Many different mindsets are possible.
- **Emotional:** Habits of unproductive emotional responses often result from our cognitive mindsets. For example, a cognitive mindset of “not being good enough” might result in experiences of extremely low self-esteem, perfectionism, depression, shame, humiliation, and overexertion. We explore what emotions predominate your life and how the afflictive emotions have joined with your thinking to cement your central issues, or core wounds.
- **Physical:** The physical body can be considered the gateway to knowledge of the visible and invisible aspects of ourselves. Thinking and feeling affect our bodies in many ways, including biochemical, kinesthetic, medical, and cellular. Together we assess body posture and language, gait, sensory data, and trauma history, consulting with your physicians, when appropriate. Physical work sometimes involves specialized trauma processing and releasing, or body movement, such as yoga, breathing, or stretching practices that help you renew your energy resources.
- **Social:** As our work evolves, ideas about improving the social structure of your life will emerge. Sometimes clients bring their loved ones to sessions, experiment with changing patterns of behavior at work, or escort their entire family to a llama-assisted therapy session at a local ranch! At the social level, through a reorganization of intimacy, power, and meaning, clients often begin to see

commitments as enhancements to well-being rather than moral imperatives. At this level, we learn to balance the needs of self and community, integrating new friendships, revitalizing existing relationships, or carving out space for enjoyable moments with our own selves.

- **Spiritual:** The spiritual factor of this work derives from your own religious or spiritual leanings. It can involve creative arts, such as sculpture, painting, music, and building and how they expand your understanding of self and improve your sense of well-being. Walks and sessions held in nature or in the company of animals can allow us to clarify our choices. Depending on your inclination, we can look at archetypes, meditation mandalas, and other symbols and guided imagery to identify your innate resources and to gain greater self knowledge. We sometimes choose to incorporate meditation and contemplation into Life Balance Training, with the goal of using our spiritual side to improve the enjoyment of life.

How Many Sessions Will I Need?

Life Balance Training is often a brief-therapy process of about 10 or 12 sessions, depending on how the relationship between the trainer and client evolves. The first two sessions are for formal assessment, although assessment of new information is ongoing. In these sessions, I learn about early family life, relationships, health, work, and spiritual or religious leanings. Then I recommend another 8 or 10 sessions, after which we can decide together whether to do more work on a particular factor, such as your emotions and thinking, the physical, or the spiritual.

More About the Trainer and Therapist

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and a Licensed K-12 School Counselor, who works with children, adults, couples, and families to maintain balance between the laughter and seriousness within themselves and their relationships and communities. Humor and a light approach are essential to my practice. In my broad range of professional experiences and roles, I have worked with diverse individuals, including business people, students, Silicon Valley executives, people in crisis, children and their families, academics, and couples.

I hold advanced degrees in Intercultural Communication, Translation, and Counseling Psychology, and post-graduate certifications in bodywork practice, body-oriented psychotherapy, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), and languages and writing. My occupational experiences have included research in interspecies communication and long-term community living.

My current passion is Llama Deara Ranch, where I raise llamas who sometimes participate in the Life Balance Training sessions with my clients. Llamas are the ultimate in curious creatures and can have us rolling on the earth in laughter. They are good medicine for curiosity, humor, and renewed relationships.

I encourage you to contact me about this work, which is best carried on in person with me in New Mexico at counseling centers in two cities, and at Llama Deara Ranch. Together we will work to make heartway along with headway in our life circumstances. Subsequent articles will address the finer details of Life Balance Training and Whole Person Integration, with a final article describing one person's experience with this work.