

25 ways to achieve a balanced LIFE

We asked some of our wisest wellness gurus, life coaches and counselors how the happiest women manage to make time for what matters. Here's what they said:

1. Make Yourself a Priority

"I've found that if I make time for what I enjoy the most, like time with my family or exercise, I'm more efficient at work," says Andrea Pennington, M.D., founder of the Pennington Institute for Health and Wellness in Silver Spring, Maryland.

2. LIVE BY A LIST!

This is a must for busy Black women. "To maintain sanity, I write to-do lists—and I make sure to include the things I need to do for balance and harmony of my mind, body and soul," says Pennington.

3. Focus on just one task and keep working on it until you finish it. Then cross it off your list.

4. Be realistic about how much time an activity takes.

5.

Think "Activity" Rather Than "Workouts"

Even ten-minute increments tone our hearts, minds and emotions. Vacuuming, dancing and walking count.

6. Limit Tube Time
People who O.D. on television tend to be more depressed than those who watch in moderation. So go ahead and TiVo *Oprah* and *Lost*, but indulge in other pastimes as well.

7. MAKE TIME FOR MEALS...

Eat three small meals and two snacks a day. Skipping meals is a big mistake. Our bodies and brains need regular infusions of nutritious food and water to work at full potential.



8...But Keep It Simple

Find nutritious meals that require little preparation. For snacks, try an orange and a yogurt. For dinner, try prewashed salad greens and canned tuna.

9. Don't Go It Alone

"Strong Black women fail to embrace that they can't do it all alone," says Toby Thompkins, author of *The Real Lives of Strong Black Women: Transcending Myths, Reclaiming Joy* (Agate).

10. Don't Play Superwoman

11. Ask for What You Need

"Black women tend to feel that their goodness comes from giving," says Toby Thompkins. "You can be putting good out into the world because you're trying to be strong, but be unwilling to receive the goodness that the world has for you. You can be too strong to receive, so to speak. And that's not healthy."

12.

Transform Your Barriers Into Boundaries

"Replace 'I'll never do this' or 'I always do that' statements with certain conditions," says Thompkins. "I'll only do this to this point." Or "I'll do this part, and the rest is yours."

13. Train others to be less needy.

Say something like: "I need to make some changes and I need your support."

14. Don't Drive Yourself Nuts

Be aware that the commute can change your whole mood, so make a conscious choice to stay positive, says life coach and motivational speaker Valorie Burton, author of *What's Really Holding You Back?* (WaterBrook).

15. Take Time to Unwind

Once home, Burton says, remove your coat or change clothes before moving on to an activity or conversation. Take five minutes to focus on your breathing. Reflect on your day and make a deliberate choice not to dwell on the things you can't do anything about until tomorrow.

16. Climb those mountains, but scale them one at a time.

17.

Begin Each Day With Purpose

Jeree Wade, M.A., a New York life coach, says that reflecting on your purpose for 15 minutes in the morning can eliminate an hour of distractions later.

18. Don't Procrastinate

"Procrastination robs hours of meaning," says Wade. Plan your schedule to get the toughest or most dreaded critical activities done first.

19. CHERISH UNEXPECTED MOMENTS OF PEACE AND QUIET.

20. Seize the day.

"Everyone has those one-day-I'm-going-to dreams," notes Darren L. Johnson in *Letting Go of Stuff: Powerful Secrets to Simplify Your Life* (Insideout Learning). "Replace 'One day I will...' with phrases that begin 'Today I will...'"

23. Schedule Free Time

"Do something very simple for at least a few minutes a day—nothing!" advises Burton. "It's one of the best ways to decrease your stress level."

24. Don't Fret Over Finances

If your biggest problem is money-related, consider yourself blessed, says Burton. Money problems can be fixed. There are other more important things, such as your relationship with God and the people you care about, your health, and your integrity.

21. Conquer Clutter

Clutter creates visual "noise" that distracts us from the task at hand, says professional organizer Jen M.R. Doman of Brooklyn. Freeing up space will free you to focus your energy on what's important.

22. EMBRACE IMPERFECTION

"Be willing to leave some things undone, recognizing the world won't come to an end because there are dishes in the sink or your in-box isn't empty," advises Burton.

25. breathe