



THE OPRAH
MAGAZINE

How to Balance your crazy life

A whole new way
to feel centered

Emotional Checkup How are you— really?

What do you know *now* that you wish you

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fitness your body

Feed it, move it, work it, love it

Balance and Age

Our ability to balance declines with age, according to Stephen Chemiske. But as he explains in his new book, *The Metabolic Plan: Stay Younger Longer* (Ballantine), you can help prevent this from happening.

Are you losing it? Stand without shoes, feet together, eyes closed, and raise one foot about six inches. Time how many seconds you can stand without opening your eyes or moving the supporting foot. Do this test three times and take the average.

Score: Most 20-year-olds can stand for 30 seconds. With each decade, the time drops by about six seconds.

To improve: Practice balance with yoga poses like the tree, or use a balance board for ten minutes a day.

Finding Center

"The whole practice of yoga—the breathing, the postures, the meditation—is about balancing your life," says Ani Kalfayan, who teaches in Sag Harbor, New York. For example, a Type A person may need an inward, soft kind of yoga; a slow-moving person might benefit from a more vigorous practice. As for the physical balance required by many of the poses, Kalfayan says, relax. When you fall out, don't be afraid; just come back to your center, without self-judgment. It's not about doing it right or getting it perfect the first time. "Yoga," she says, "takes time and repetition."

Can You Stand (on) It?

The hottest new piece of gym equipment neither pumps muscle nor burns fat: it's a balance board, and it develops an essential athletic skill. If you think these boards are for wimps, try standing on one—just hang on to your humility.

» **Indo Board:** The goal is to "ride" this mini surfboard set on an unattached roller without letting either end touch the ground. Used by physical therapists and chiropractors to strengthen the knees and back, the board also prepares you for sports like in-line skating and tennis.

» **Reebok Core Board:** This is a disc-shaped platform that pivots on a firm base. As you perform various moves, the board twists and recoils, requiring your body to use its deepest trunk muscles to steady itself.

» **BOSU Board:** Resembling an exercise ball cut in half, trainers often use the BOSU to intensify Pilates and yoga. "It makes every rep cheat-proof," says Los Angeles-based trainer Ellen Barrett. "If you don't use the right muscles, you'll fall off."



[invisible exercise of the month]

Next time you're waiting in line at the bank or grocery store, try this tai chi move to improve your balance, suggests wellness expert Scott Cole. The horse stance: Stand erect with feet parallel and shoulder-distance apart, then breathe in, exhale, slightly bend your knees, and settle down into your body. Focus your attention on a point two inches below your navel, and relax into your breathing for a few minutes. Do this on a daily basis, says Cole, and you will not only feel more balanced during other activities but also stave off joint problems and arthritis that may come with aging.



Written by
Michelle Stacey