

THE BIG IDEAS

What Life Do You Want?

Know and create it.

Best-Version-of-You

Becoming that is meaning of life.

The Ultimate Question

How is the best way to live?

Energy Management

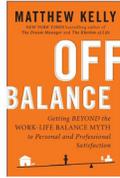
Is everything.

The Decade View

Take it.

Core Habits

What are your top 5?



Off Balance

Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction

BY MATTHEW KELLY · AVERY © 2011 · 160 PAGES

“So what is it that people need and want? People need and want a satisfying experience of life. Over the past three years I have asked more than ten thousand respondents, ‘If you had to choose between balance and satisfaction, which would you choose?’ Not a single respondent chose balance over satisfaction. People want to live deeply satisfying lives both personally and professionally. They want to know that both are possible at the same time. They want to be told that they don’t have to sacrifice their personal priorities on the alter of corporate America in order to have a satisfying career. People want personal and professional satisfaction (PPS). ...”

The promise of this book is to help you design and build a more satisfying life in both the personal and professional arenas. We will do this together by approaching our lives with the strategy and rigor with which the very best companies in the world approach business. The result is a personalized system that you will be able to apply to your life, year after year, to drive higher levels of satisfaction. If you are faithful to the system, I promise you this book will change your life.”

~ Matthew Kelly from *Off Balance*

I’m a big fan of [Matthew Kelly](#) and his wisdom. Check out our Notes on a couple other great books: [Perfectly Yourself](#) + [The Rhythms of Life](#).

Let’s take his quiz:

If you had to choose between balance and satisfaction, which would you choose?

Satisfaction, right?

10,000 out of 10,000 people agree.

Who wants “balance” anyway? And who came up with the idea of “work-life” balance?

Matthew makes the point that “work-life balance” presupposes that work isn’t already an important, integrated part of your life. You simply can’t (!) (and shouldn’t want to) separate the two but when you throw out a phrase like “work-life balance” you create a weird, unnecessary dichotomy.

MUCH better to dynamically create a sense of personal and professional satisfaction. PPS. Helping us do that is what this book is all about. (Get a copy [here](#).)

It’s a super-quick reading, inspiring, practical little book packed with Big Ideas. I’m excited to share a few of my favorites so let’s jump straight in!

“If you had to choose between balance and satisfaction, which would you choose?”

~ Matthew Kelly

WHAT LIFE DO YOU REALLY WANT?

"So the bad news is that you cannot have it all. The good news is that you don't really want it all. The even better news is that you can experience incredible levels of satisfaction both personally and professionally if you take the time to work out what matters most to you."

~ Matthew Kelly

"So, let's start to think about the life you really want. I find the best way to do this is to ponder a few questions. You may choose to read straight through these questions and straight through to the end of the chapter, and that's fine. But I would encourage you to come back to these questions at different times in the coming days and weeks and spend a little time pondering each. It is my hope that they will help you explore what is possible.

1. What do you like about your life as it is today?
2. What don't you like about your life as it is today?
3. Do you feel trapped by any of the things that you don't like about your life today?
4. If you went to the doctor next week and he told you that you were dying and had one year to live, What would you do for the next year?
5. If you inherited \$10 billion, what would you do with the rest of your life, and what would you do with the money?
6. What is holding you back from the life you really want?
7. If you could change three things about your life, what would they be?"

Those are really, really powerful questions.

They're part of chapter #1 on "The Best Way to Live" in which Matthew establishes the fact that we don't have to settle for the life we've stumbled into.

We can CHOOSE to create our optimal life.

But, that requires that we step back and ask the question all great civilizations have asked:

"What is the best way to live?"

In the Prologue to the book, Matthew shares the classic story of the big-time New York City banker who goes on vacation to Mexico and sees a fisherman who only works for a couple hours a day then relaxes with his family and friends.

The Harvard MBA explains to the fisherman that he can work more hours, buy a new boat and scale up the operations over a couple decades until he's so big that he can go public and make millions.

Then what? Then, the punch line says, he can move to a tiny village in Mexico, fish a couple hours a day and hang out with his friends and family.

We read that story with a wry smile, silently chiding the business guy for being so ambitious and, if we're really unhappy with our lives, wishing we could be like that fisherman.

But, Matthew asks: Do we REALLY want to be like that fisherman? He has no electricity, no phone, no internet, not a whole lot of the things we take for granted. He lives on \$125/mo and if you REALLY wanted that life you could make it happen pretty easily.

But, important point: WE DON'T REALLY WANT THAT LIFE.

All that brings us back to the primary theme of the first chapter.

If we're dissatisfied with our lives we need to lean into that. Own it. And do the (hard) work of figuring out what we need to shift so we can live in integrity with our highest ideals.

Those questions are a great way to shine more light on what we really want and how we can create our optimal lives.

What life do you really want?

"Success always has required and always will require sacrifice. If success were easy, it would be common. It is difficult and that is why it is rare. More people have talent than you would think. Few are willing to make the necessary sacrifices."

~ Matthew Kelly

BECOMING THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOU

"The first principle is simply this: you are here to become the-best-possible-version-of-yourself. It would seem clear that you are not here to become the second-rate-version-of-yourself. Nor are you here to be another version of your parents, teachers, friends, or siblings. At some very basic foundational level you are here to be yourself. Being yourself is much more difficult than most would suppose, however, because it requires the real work of self-discovery. Nonetheless, in this you share a common bond with all men, women, and children, for we are all here to become the-best-version-of-ourselves. The best way to live, therefore, is in such ways that help you become the-best-version-of-yourself. ...

Everything makes sense in relation to the first principle. Life is about saying yes to the things that help you become the-best-version-of-yourself and no to the things that don't. It is not more complicated than that. Of course, we manage to complicate it quite a deal more. On a different plane of thinking the concept becomes a thing of beauty, for we finally realize that anyone or anything that does not help us to become a better-version-of-ourselves is just too small for us. What liberation and joy we experience when we make this truth our own for the very first time."

One of the primary, brilliant themes of Matthew's work is the fact that our ultimate purpose is to become the-best-possible-version-of-ourselves.

It's a UNIVERSAL purpose we all share.

I just filmed Purpose 101 yesterday and said, essentially, the same thing. I described it as "One Purpose + Many Missions."

We all have the exact same ultimate purpose: To actualize our potential (aka become the-best-version-of-ourselves) while giving our gifts to our families and to the world. One purpose.

Then, of course, how we each give our gifts to the world is unique to us and will evolve throughout our lives. Many missions.

What I love about Matthew's frame is that, once we REALLY own that, it makes life rather straight-forward. Each moment gives us an opportunity to say yes to the opportunities/people/behaviors/thoughts/etc. that help us become the best-version-of-ourselves.

Moment to moment to moment, we're constantly making choices. Let's choose wisely!

HOW IS THE BEST WAY TO LIVE?

"How is the best way to live? It is a beautiful question. Allow this question a place in your inner dialogue. Start to ponder it. Pause deliberately to reflect upon it. Experiment with it. Explore the best way to start your day. Try several ways and note how you feel as your day begins and ends, your energy level rises and falls, your focus and efficiency wax and wane. Once you have discovered the best way to start your day, experiment with the best way to end your day. Having answered this question, you can move on to the best way to live a weekend. How is the best way to live? It is an incredible question. A casual affair with this question is not enough, and more than that, a casual fling with this question may do more harm than good. The question needs to be approached rigorously and strategically. If you think you are not willing or able to do that, set this book down and do not look back upon it until you are ready to fully embrace the question."

How is the best way to live?

Pause for a moment and think about that. ...

Start with the beginning of your day. How is the best way to start your days?

How about the end of your days? What is the best way to end your days?

"How is the best way to live? It is a question that challenges us to consider how we are living our one short life and what is possible. It is a question that challenges our lives to evolve."

~ Matthew Kelly

Sounds a lot like our [Masterpiece Days 101](#) class, eh? :)

We start with our AM + PM bookends—those parts of our days we have the most control over. Let's slow down and take a moment to capture some 4% optimizing opportunities.

What's your ideal AM look like? Capture it now in a few words: _____
_____.

Your PM? _____
_____.

The rest of your day? _____
_____.

How is the best way to live? <— THAT's the ticket.

HOW LONG CAN YOU HOLD THIS GLASS OF WATER?

"Next, I ask for a couple more volunteers to come and hold a glass of water. This time I instruct them that they are required to hold the glass of water straight out for a minute at a time, and between those times they are allowed to take a break for twenty seconds. In most cases, they are able to hold the glass for one-minute intervals with twenty second breaks indefinitely.

Knowing how to balance various activities in our life to produce the maximum flow of energy is perhaps the most important skill any of us can learn and develop. Each of us has to work out how long we hold the proverbial glass of water in our lives, and each of us needs to determine what sort of breaks we need from holding the glass."

That's from a chapter called "Batteries Included" which is all about ENERGY MANAGEMENT.

Matthew tells us that being skilled in "time management"—although cutting-edge decades ago—is now a given. Of course you need to manage your time well to succeed.

The bigger challenge these days is ENERGY MANAGEMENT. Our energy is, pretty much, e.v.e.r.y.t.h.i.n.g.

You may have noticed that you're a slightly different person when your battery is fully charged than when it's not. Therefore, if you're serious about expressing the best-version-of-yourself more and more consistently, figuring out how to dial in your energy is (obviously) huge.

Let's go back to that quote above for a moment. Imagine being asked to hold a glass of water straight out in front of you for as long as you can. The average person can do it for 3 to 5 minutes. It's just a glass of water but it gets heavy fast. :)

No breaks = rapidly depleted energy. But... If we hold it for a minute and then take a 20-second break, we can hold it nearly indefinitely.

Indefinitely vs. 3 minutes. <— That's a wide margin. :)

As we've discussed a number of times throughout these Notes (see [The Power of Full Engagement](#) + [Toughness Training for Life](#)), we need to honor our [ultradian rhythms](#). We need to make waves. ON and then OFF. ON and then OFF. Oscillating like everything in nature does.

One of the key ways to do this is to get REALLY clear on the things that drain us and the things that energize us. So...

What drains you? What energizes you?

KNOW this stuff. Then, swap out the #1 thing that drains you for the #1 thing that energizes you. Sounds simple (because it is) but imagine your life with that shift.

"If the next leap in human excellence will be the result of energy management, we need to become infinitely familiar with the people, places, things, and activities that energize us—and equally familiar with the people, places, things, and activities that drain our energy."

~ Matthew Kelly

I made a big distinction on this front just last week. One of the top things that energizes me? Hiking. Yet, I wasn't hiking AT ALL.

Instead, after a great morning of deep work awesome, I'd allow myself to go online and grind away a bit at email and online stuff—which DRAINS me.

So, I decided to reduce the draining stuff (in typical fashion I'm going ALL IN and seeing if I can go 100% without email—inspired by a chat with [Cal Newport](#) + [this HBR article](#)) and swap out that draining excessive online time with the energizing hiking time.

Early data says that's a very wise choice to become the-best-version-of-myself.

Your swap?

TAKE THE DECADE VIEW

"If you want to change the trajectory of your career, change the period of time you deal with and think about. If you want to change your life, change the period of time you think about.

So, the first step is, don't be in too much of a hurry to create the ideal life you have imagined. Personal and professional satisfaction are built like a castle, one brick at a time. We tend to overestimate what we can do in a day and underestimate what we can do in a week. In the same way, we tend to overestimate what we can do in a year and underestimate what we can do in a decade.

Take a decade view. Give yourself a decade to build the life you have imagined for yourself, one that is rich and overflowing with personal and professional satisfaction. Until you take the decade view, until you begin to imagine and plan what you can do in a decade, you have not even begun to explore your potential."

That's from a chapter called "Systems Drive Behaviors."

If you've ever thought about it, you know that McDonalds is THE ultimate systems-machine. Yes, you can cook a better burger than Micky D's, but can you cook tens of millions in one day?

In short: If we want to optimize we need to get strategic like the best businesses in the world.

Systems drive behaviors. And, a great system starts with a long-term desired outcome. You need to know what you want. THEN, you figure out the strategy, plan, and SYSTEMS to get there.

Matthew brings the point home by reflecting on how much various people at McDonalds make depending on the time horizon for which they're responsible. Here's a super quick look:

- 90 second = Drive-thru clerk = \$7-\$8/hr
- 8 hours = Shift manager = \$12-\$15/hr
- 3 months = Store manager = \$20/hr
- 1 year = Regional manager = \$35-\$40/hr
- 20 years = CEO = \$10,000/hr (= \$20m/year)

What's your DECADE view of your life?

Know the outcome. Get fired up. Then build the systems that will drive your behavior to make that outcome a foregone conclusion.

P.S. Here's a little gem: "My father used to tell me that for every minute spent planning, twelve minutes is saved on average. That would mean that my thirty minutes on a Sunday afternoon spent planning, strategizing, and staging my week saves me six hours every week. I think my father is wrong. If I had to guess, I suspect that thirty minutes saves me ten to fifteen hours each week by helping me avoid wasting time and increasing my efficiency."

"You can have a more satisfying life. You can have both personal and professional satisfaction. But nobody is going to just give it to you. It must be sought with relentless desire and commitment. Above all else, satisfaction must be sought patiently and with an overwhelming sense that we are responsible for creating satisfaction."
~ Matthew Kelly

"To lay your head on your pillow at night, knowing that who you are and what you do makes sense . . . now, that is satisfaction."

~ Matthew Kelly

WHAT ARE YOUR CORE HABITS?

"If you look back on the past ninety days, some days were better than others. There were probably some great days, a lot of fairly average days, and perhaps some bad days. What caused the great days? Was each one just happenstance, completely out of your control, nothing to do with you? Or are there certain things that you did that predisposed that day to being a great day?"

... I started asking myself what components guaranteed (barring any disaster) that I would have a really good day. I came up with five things, and I call these core habits. Each year I reassess my core habits. Sometimes they change and sometimes they don't. But I know that if I do these five things on any given day the chances of me not having a really good day are pretty slim."

Core Habits. I love this extension to our Keystone Habit Idea in [Habits 101](#).

When you do THESE things, you're pretty much *GUARANTEED* to have a pretty good day.

What are yours?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(Mine? Good night of sleep. AM1 + AM2 Deep Work. Hour w/Emerson. Train hard/hike. Eat!)

If you're already rockin' those pretty consistently, fantastic. If you're not, Matthew says: start with THE #1 thing that will have THE most positive impact in your life and get to a point where you can do that 80% of the time. Then identify the next #1 thing. Repeat.

That's a super quick look at this great book. Here's to letting go of the balance myth as we target personal and professional SATISFACTION in our lives!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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you'll probably like...

[Perfectly Yourself](#)

[The Rhythms of Life](#)

[The Power of Full Engagement](#)

[Toughness Training for Life](#)

About the Author of "Off Balance"

MATTHEW KELLY



Matthew Kelly is an internationally acclaimed speaker and author, as well as the founder and president of Floyd Consulting. Over the past decade, he has given more than 2,500 keynote presentations and has done conventions for Fortune 500 companies, national trade associations, professional organizations, universities, churches and nonprofits. He lives in Cincinnati. Connect: matthewkelly.com.

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.