

My Balance

Martha Espinoza de Gomez

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does balance mean? What are some different contexts where you might hear the word? Use it yourself in a few sentences.
2. What interests and pressures are you trying to balance in your life?

Introduction

I need to balance my time. I'm a mom of two boys: Beni, 16 years old, and Juan, 12 years old. I take care of my husband, my work, and my home, and it's important to take care of myself too.

Family and Friends

My boys need me all the time for rides to school, to their activities, and to friends' houses. They have a lot of activities and a lot of friends! My son Juan even asked me if I could go to his school and bring a special lunch to him for *Día del Niño* (Children's Day)!

It's important for me to spend time with my husband. I'm trying to take more time to listen to his and the boys' needs and feelings. I need to share time with my husband's family too. I like to see friends and family on special occasions, for example, *Día de las Madres* (Mother's Day).

My Job

I am a hairstylist, and I am my own assistant. I have to organize my work appointments in my book. If I made more money, I would hire an assistant to do this.

Planning, Shopping, Cooking, and Cleaning

Every day, I must organize my time in the kitchen. I like to cook and eat. I can spend all day long cooking. I need to plan the menus for the week and make a grocery list. I cook three meals every day during the summer and school holidays and



two meals every day during the rest of the year. For example, today I'm making *mole de pollo con arroz*. I must plan my menus well, because I also need to clean the house, do the dishes, wash the clothes, and work.

Taking Care of Myself

Now my priority is to take care of myself. I am almost 50 years old. At this age I've got to watch my weight, cholesterol, and blood pressure. I like to exercise and do yoga. I take a cardio class at 5:30 AM, Monday through Friday, and I do yoga at 9 AM, two times per week. I found that the yoga, along with meditation and relaxation, is really important to solve my sleep problems.

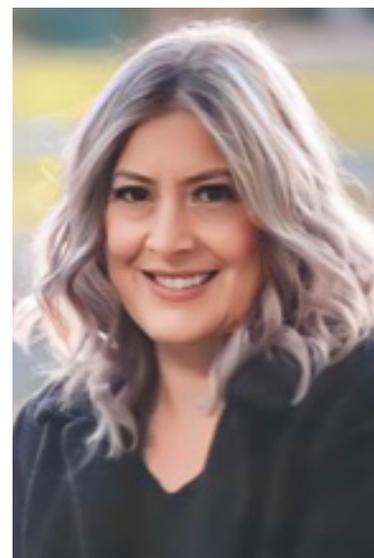
I need time to learn English. I have to read, watch TV and conversation videos, do homework, and meet with my tutor.

I want time for my hobbies. For example, I like to work in the garden. My favorite plants are succulents, peonies, orchids, dahlias, rhododendrons, and hydrangeas. I enjoy using my sewing machine. I especially like to repair my own clothes.

Conclusion

I have many things to do, but my priorities are taking care of myself, my boys' mental health, and my relationship with my husband. I see clients and do my English class when my husband is working and my children are in school, so I have time for them when they're home. After work on Saturday morning, my weekend time is only for my family. I do everything by getting up early and going to bed late.

Martha Espinoza is a student at Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy Program in Santa Rosa, CA. Martha was living in Guadalajara, Mexico, and had her own hair salon when, in 2002, she met her husband, who was on vacation there. Martha moved to the U.S. with him one year later.



AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are the key components of Martha's life that she is trying to balance?
2. Study the structure of this essay. How is it organized?
3. Using this structure as a model, write an essay about the components of your life that you are holding (or that you are trying to hold) in balance.

Martha Has Many Transferable Skills!

Transferable skills are portable skills. You could use these skills in many different jobs. For example, as a hair stylist, Martha has to schedule her appointments. She has developed the skill of organizing her day, communicating with clients, and using a calendar (perhaps a digital calendar). Those are skills she could use at any job. Here is a list of more transferable skills. How does Martha use these skills? How do you use these skills?

Skill	An Example of How Martha Uses this Skill
Leadership and Initiative	
Flexibility and Adaptability	
Communication	
Self-management	
Emotional Intelligence	