

T387 — What Does It Mean to Be a People of Balance?

When we talk of balance, it's natural for calm and rest to be the first things that come to mind. There's no getting around it: many of us are tired. We're overworked, over-busy, over-committed. Striving and stress have become the badges we wear to prove that we are of worth. We are often so weighed down by responsibility and worry that it only takes one drop of something unexpected to tip us over. So, yes, we long for rest. Yes, we want less to manage and juggle. Yes, we need balance's reminder that a place of calm and peace is possible.

And yet, pointing us to peace and calm is not all that balance is about. Remembering this is at the center of this month's work. Indeed, there is no better month than March to help us embrace balance's *many* meanings.

For instance, take the religious holidays in March. [*Lent*](#) reminds us that balance is a place of reassessment, renewal, preparation, and even repentance. It honors the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his ministry and the path to the cross. The balance he sought in the desert was not that of restful escape, but that of restorative re-centering. Balance got him ready, rather than simply offering him relief. [*Passover*](#) also puts its own spin on balance. It is a time to retell the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt after centuries of slavery. For it, balance is a matter of remembering, of pausing to put yourself back into a story that connects you with others and anchors you in a counter-cultural narrative. During Passover, the balance one finds is not that of calm but that of reconnection. There's also [*Ostara*](#), the Pagan celebration of the Vernal Equinox. It honors the balance of day and night, but more importantly it celebrates the way this balance is a tipping point on the way to Spring. It's a reminder that stillpoints are rarely still. They are a place of turning, a space where shifts happen and new life emerges. And finally the Hindu holiday of [*Holi*](#) also needs to be held up, with its ritual of restoring one's belief in the power of good over evil. It's a reminder that balance and calm isn't just found by taking a break from life, but by trusting in its goodness once again.

March is also the month in which we honor many people who gave their lives to the cause of justice. The list is large:

- The [*Selma–Montgomery March*](#) happened March 21-25, 1965
- [*James Reeb*](#) was murdered on March 11, 1965
- [*Viola Liuzzo*](#) was murdered on March 25, 1965
- March is Women's history month with its call to remember the long history and continuing work for Women's equality.
- [*Susan B. Anthony's*](#) death was March 13
- Archbishop [*Oscar Romero*](#) was killed on March 24, 1980

These anniversaries remind us that being a “people of balance” is often the opposite of keeping things calm. In order to move toward a balance of justice, we have to upset the current state of things. Oppressive systems need to be challenged and toppled. We need to sacrifice our calm and comfort, and instead “go all in.” Achieving a balance of equality requires us to be purposefully off-balance with our culture, or as Martin Luther King Jr. said, we need people who are “maladjusted.” Being out of sync with “the way things are” is the first step toward a better balance for all.

Add all this up and suddenly “balance” takes on a new meaning. Actually, it takes on *many* new meanings. The observances of March remind us that balance is not simply a destination, but also a place of invitation. It’s not a static space of peace, as much as a stillpoint on which we pivot and turn to something new. It’s not just about rest, but about resting up *for a journey*. Yes, balance allows us to catch our breath, but it’s also about finding our center so we can end all our aimless wandering around. It’s fine to think of balance by imagining the Buddha sitting peacefully under a tree, but we can’t let that overshadow the image of a diver balancing way up there on her diving board, pausing to re-gain her composure and courage so she can leap and go “all in.”

Another way to put all this is to ask, “What is your balance *for*?” Maybe instead of asking each other, “Have you found balance?” we need to ask “Where is your balance taking you?” Yes, balance sometimes can be an end in itself, but this month and its observances remind us that more often balance is a means to a greater end. In other words, maybe balance isn’t the prize but the springboard. Maybe balance isn’t the goal, but the source of strength that gets us where we need to go.

Which means that our most important questions this month might actually be, “Do you know where you’re trying to get to?” and “Which kind of balance will help you along your way?”

As always, you do not need to answer every single question. Instead, find the ones that “hook” you.

1. Talk about how the way you spend your time reflects your priorities and values. How would your balance feel different if your time were spent more, or less, in line with your values?
2. We need a balance of work, love and play. Which of these three legs needs more of your attention? Have you become a one- or two-legged stool?
3. What would happen to your balance if you let go of that thing around which you’ve been trying so hard?
4. How might managing your boundaries help your balance?
5. When might it be appropriate to go out of balance on purpose?
6. Share your thoughts about the relationship, if any, between spirituality and balance.
7. How is balance reflected in our UU Principles?