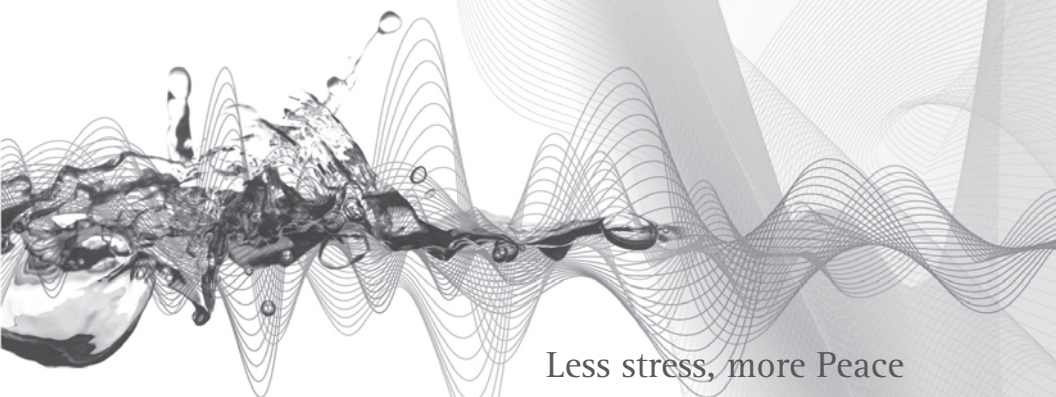




your Life in Rhythm



Less stress, more Peace
Less frustration, more Fulfillment
Less discouragement, more Hope

BRUCE MILLER



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. | Carol Stream, Illinois



Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Your Life in Rhythm

Copyright © 2009 by Bruce B. Miller. All rights reserved.

Cover photo of water copyright © by Daniele Barioglio/iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Cover artwork copyright © by iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Designed by Jacqueline L. Nuñez

Published in association with the literary agency of Mark Sweeney & Associates, 28540 Altessa Way, Suite 201, Bonita Springs, FL 34135.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked *The Message* are taken from *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Miller, Bruce, date.

Your life in rhythm / Bruce Miller.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4143-1977-3 (sc : alk. paper)

1. Time management—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Time. 3. Time—Religious aspects—Christianity. 4. Simplicity—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4598.5.M55 2009

248.4—dc22

2009005316

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

I have long believed that skill in the art of living is not so much a question of balancing priorities as it is the wisdom of creative responses to the opportunities that are given to us by the unexpected providences of God. *Your Life in Rhythm* offers an original and insightful approach for dealing with the multiple challenges of daily living. Bruce Miller's practical counsel for living in rhythm will yield a life that is characterized by shalom rather than by anxiety.

DR. KENNETH BOA

president, Reflections Ministries and Trinity House Publishers

As we are drawn into the “tyranny of the urgent” in our daily lives, we are in danger of missing out on the truly significant things in life. For many of us, life's stressors threaten to rob us of our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Bruce Miller challenges us to consider a fresh approach that has the potential to lift our spirits and lighten our burdens. The stress-relieving principles in this book will improve the quality of our lives today and may prolong our years of productive living.

CAMRON NELSON, M.D.

executive vice president and medical director, Cooper Clinic at Craig Ranch

For decades, we've been chasing the mirage of work/life balance, but Bruce Miller dares to bust the myth. As both an academic who has studied the history of ideas and a pastor who deals with the messiness of real life, Miller describes a practical way to live healthier lives. His six rhythm strategies will improve your life.

DR. JIM GARLOW

senior pastor, Skyline Church, San Diego

Every day, I tackle a long list of duties and goals. Saying “no” is difficult for me. I want to do it all, but I can't, so I end up frustrated and full of guilt. Reading this book is changing my life. As I discover the rhythms of life, stress, guilt, and exhaustion disappear, leaving a healthier, more relaxed me, freer to serve more fully. I'm excited!

MARIETTA SCURRY JOHNSON

St. Mark's School of Texas

Your Life in Rhythm speaks to the heart of why *rhythm* is so critical for the long-term success of men and women in positions of leadership. My hope is that organizations will shift from talking about the old broken paradigm of work/life balance to the new way of rhythm, which I believe will lead to healthier lives.

TOM WILSON

president and CEO, Leadership Network

When I read *Your Life in Rhythm*, it was like a ton of bricks were lifted off my shoulders. Guilt disappeared and priorities realigned—almost instantly! This book gives readers a powerful blueprint for living.

GAYLA SIMMONS

mother of two and president, Hospitality Marketing & Media

We live in a 24/7 world that knows two speeds: *on* and *off*. But most of us have forgotten where the switch is. Bruce Miller has filled this book with great stories and practical wisdom that will give you hope for escaping the frenetic pace of modern life and action strategies to help you fully engage in the life God sends your way.

BILL PEEL

founder, 24/Seven Project

We can all learn from Bruce Miller's wisdom as he encourages us to do life and ministry in concert with the rhythms and seasons of life. This book couldn't be more timely for a stressed-out and overwhelmed culture.

DR. DAVID ANDERSON

senior pastor, Bridgeway Community Church, Columbia, MD

Your Life in Rhythm is a truly compelling and seminal work that provocatively challenges the illusion of trying to find “balance” in life. Bruce Miller presents a completely new time-management paradigm. *Your Life in Rhythm* is a must read for anyone desiring to “live full out without burning out.”

BART SALMON

divisional vice president, Macy's

This book takes Stephen Covey's powerful *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* to another level. Bruce Miller calls us to a fresh paradigm—beyond time management, beyond the balanced life, beyond prioritizing our to-do lists—to harmonize with the rhythms God put there in the first place. Buy this book, practice it, and watch what God will do.

ROWLAND FORMAN

executive director, Living Stones Leadership Ministries, New Zealand

I first heard these truths when Bruce presented them to a group of young leaders. It was like rain in the midst of a drought. Leaders want to be fully engaged with life but not feed unhealthy lifestyles. *Your Life in Rhythm* contains both great conceptual and practical tools for readers to reimagine and restore their lives to proper rhythms.

DAVE TRAVIS

managing director, Leadership Network

This book is especially beneficial for those of us in cross-cultural work, an occupation in which it is very difficult to distinguish when work begins and when it ends. I'm convinced that if we understand life's rhythms and apply the rhythm strategies, we will experience a more abundant life here on earth—the way Christ intends for us to live. Bruce Miller has given me hope—and stress relief!

KATIE

team leader, ReachGlobal, Asia

If you are looking for balance in your life, perhaps you are looking for the wrong thing. *Your Life in Rhythm* shows you how to match your life to the rhythms and cycles of life. Here you will find strategies and road maps that will reduce your stress and give you hope.

KERBY ANDERSON

national director, Probe Ministries

Bruce Miller presents insights that set us free from the unrealistic demands that we have bought into. By showing us the spiritual logic of life's rhythms, he opens a door to the peace and well-being that we desperately need.

DR. JENNIE TISSING

grants administrator, Methodist Health System

Balance isn't just an elusive goal; it's a fruitless pursuit. It's also conspicuously absent in Scripture and in the lives of people who make a mark in life. That's why I'm so excited about Bruce Miller's concept of *rhythm*. It's true to life, to Scripture, and to the way God created us. It's a message that needs to be heard widely.

LARRY OSBORNE

author and pastor, North Coast Church, Vista, CA

Every now and then, an idea comes along that shakes the very foundations of what we believe to be true. Trying to live our lives "in balance" has become so much a part of us that it seems almost natural, like bars on the windows must seem to a prisoner serving a life sentence. Thankfully, this book frees us from the impossible expectations that "balance" imposes on us, and it allows us to view life and living from a better, higher, more-natural vantage point.

JIM PIKL

attorney, father of three

Bruce Miller has discovered a different and better way to live that allows us to fully engage in work and fully enjoy our rest in every season of our lives by forgetting about balance and by embracing the rhythms of life.

DR. ERIC SWANSON

coauthor of The Externally Focused Church

Finally I can throw out all those time management books that didn't work for me! And I can stop feeling guilty about it! *Your Life in Rhythm* lays out a systematic approach to living our lives in harmony with God's organic and natural rhythms.

LINDA STANLEY

director of life stage leadership community groups, Leadership Network

Bruce Miller brings all of his skills to bear on one of the biggest problems facing society today—the burnout that comes from the delusion of “balance.” The idea that we should strive to “have it all” and somehow keep everything on an even keel is not only impossible, it's fundamentally wrongheaded. Bruce leads us back to the truth laid forth in Ecclesiastes: Life is about seasons, rhythms.

HUNTLEY PATON

executive editor, Bizjournals

Your Life in Rhythm will revolutionize the way you look at every facet of your life. You will not be the same person now after reading this book. I guarantee it.

DR. MONROE BREWER

president, National Association of Missions Pastors

Your Life in Rhythm has had a positive impact on my life in several ways. Understanding the current rhythm of my life has given me peace of mind and joy in the midst of a difficult trial.

SUSAN ALLEN

vice president of product development for four life insurance companies

When I was at a neighborhood playground with my kids one day, it occurred to me that there were no more teeter-totters—yet the swings remained. The teeter-totter's demise was ultimately caused by one's inability to balance the ups and downs. The swing also goes up and down, yet it does so in a rhythm that one has some control over. Work/life balance has gone the way of the teeter-totter—you can't manage it. Get on the swing; get into a rhythm. Bruce Miller will give you the push you need to get started.

DAN MATHEWS

senior group manager, Frito-Lay Growth, Commercialization & Customization

I find myself strongly drawn to Bruce's thinking about the rhythmic life. Standing in stark contrast to the burden of balance, *rhythm* rings true and offers freedom to truly live.

BRAD MERKLE

software developer

Contents

Introduction: The Burden of "Balance"	ix
--	----

Part I: Rhythm

1. How I Got Rhythm	3
2. Our Busy Lives and the Burden of Balance	13
3. Why Rhythm Offers a Better Life	23
4. Kairos and Chronos Rhythms	35

Part II: Kairos Rhythm Strategies

5. Your Personal Seasons and Life Stages	45
6. Kairos Strategy #1: Release Expectations	67
7. Kairos Strategy #2: Seize Opportunities	83
8. Kairos Strategy #3: Anticipate What's Next	105

Part III: Chronos Rhythm Strategies

9. The Five Chronos Cycles	121
10. Chronos Strategy #1: Pace Yourself	137
11. Chronos Strategy #2: Build Rituals	153
12. Chronos Strategy #3: Oscillate Work and Rest	173

Part IV: A Rhythm Solution Process

13. Putting It All Together	193
---------------------------------------	-----

Part V: Ultimate Rhythm

14. Seeing from Eternity	211
------------------------------------	-----

Conclusion: Living in Rhythm	219
---	-----

Appendix A: Scheduling Your Life Events in Chronos Cycles	227
Appendix B: Rhythm Solution Process Worksheets	243
Questions for Group Discussion and Personal Reflection.	247
Notes	251
About the Author	259

Introduction

THE BURDEN OF "BALANCE"

Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Do you find yourself putting in lots of extra time at work or running all over town to drop off the kids at their activities? Are you juggling responsibilities at home, work, church, and school? And does it seem you have at least one too many balls in the air?

As you've been juggling priorities and doing your best to keep everything going, has someone told you, in one way or another, that you need to get your life *in balance*? If so, you've picked up the right book.

Countless time-management systems and strategies are built on this notion of balancing your life. Perhaps you've even been to a seminar on work/life balance, which has become a hot topic in recent years.

Stephen Covey writes in *Forbes* magazine, "The challenge of work/life balance is without question one of the most significant struggles faced by modern man. I've surveyed thousands of audiences about their greatest personal and professional challenges. Life balance is always at or near the top."¹

Jim Bird, president of WorkLifeBalance.com, says, "The demand for work/life balance solutions by employees and managers is expanding at an unprecedented rate. As a result, work-life balance is an increasingly hot topic in boardrooms and government halls today. Over the coming decade it will be one of the most important issues that executives and human resource professionals will be expected to manage."²

But what if this pursuit of "balance" is part of the problem

Your Life in Rhythm

rather than the solution? What if the goal of “achieving balance,” however well intentioned, is an unwise, unworkable, and unattainable objective? What if chasing after “balance” only puts more impossible burdens on our backs and pushes us closer to burnout?

The concept of life balance is so cemented in our cultural vocabulary that it’s hard to look beyond it to the possibility of something better. But what if you could find a way to live full-out without burning out? What if you could enjoy a refreshing new approach to living “the good life,” a way to reduce your stress and increase your peace while achieving a more fulfilling life?

I’m not talking about a perfect life or a panacea that will solve all your problems. There is no magic cure that will remove all your stress and difficulties. But that doesn’t mean you have to settle for burnout, busyness, and guilt. There *is* a better way. It’s called getting your life in rhythm.

Finding a More Natural Way to Live

Scientists are discovering that living rhythmically leads to healthier lives. If you think about it, it makes sense. Our entire world moves in rhythms. Seasons change. Winter gives way to spring, which heats up into summer and cools into fall, and then winter comes again. The moon waxes and wanes. The sun rises and sets. Life oscillates; it is not linear or uniform.

Our very lives are dependent on rhythms. From the beating of our hearts to the breathing of our lungs to our need for food and sleep, our bodies function according to rhythms.

If we shift our time-management and life-management paradigms from *balance* to *rhythm*, we can bring our lives into harmony with the rhythms of the natural world and resolve

the unnecessary guilt we feel over trying, but failing, to keep everything in balance.

In the pages to follow, I will introduce you to six rhythm strategies. If you put them into practice, they will give you a better life—a healthier, more fulfilled life—in harmony with life’s flows and cycles. Simply stated, when you live rhythmically, you will find out how to accomplish what really matters with less stress and less guilt. You will discover how to achieve freedom from aimless busyness and how to live full-out without burning out. You will learn how to relax and enjoy life more.

Your life in rhythm. This is the way you were meant to live.

How to Get the Most from This Book

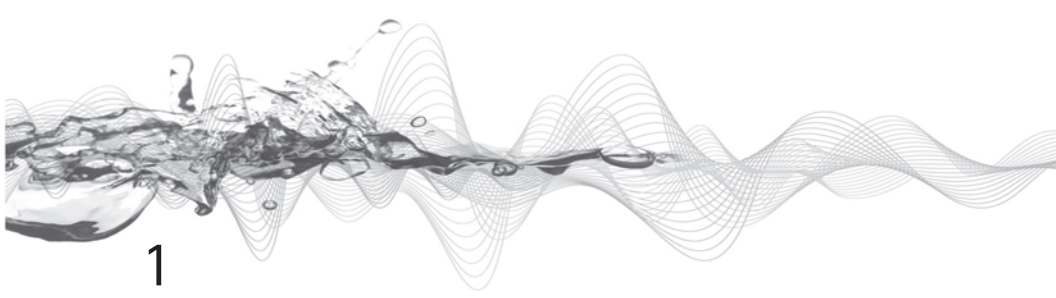
Your Life in Rhythm presents a new paradigm for life that has immediate, practical implications. In order to get the most benefit from reading this book, consider the following suggestions:

1. **Read the book with other people.** *Your Life in Rhythm* is designed to work well in a group or team setting. At the end of the book there are questions to stimulate conversation and personal reflection. Many people find they want to talk about the ideas and receive encouragement from others who are beginning to use the rhythm strategies.
2. **Do the exercises.** In some chapters, you will find a short exercise to apply the strategy to your life. In this way, the book becomes practical right away.
3. **Share the ideas with other people.** Start conversations about rhythm, and encourage others to adopt this life-changing paradigm.

PART I

Rhythm





1

How I Got Rhythm

*I've got rhythm; I've got music . . . who could ask
for anything more?*

GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN

As an approach to life, “balance” never made sense to me. Intuitively, I knew something was wrong with it, but I could not put my finger on it. What alternative could there be to the goal of a balanced life?

Friends justly accuse me of being “type A times ten.” I like to drive hard and fast, and I’m focused on achieving results. Inevitably, though, I get too many plates spinning, and some crash to the ground. Busyness has been a constant feature of my life. Countless times, well-meaning people have told me I need to “get my life in balance.” But what does that mean?

Honestly, I tried to picture what a balanced life would look

Your Life in Rhythm

like for me, but I couldn't do it. The lack of a clear description bothered me. No one could give me a good definition of a balanced life—it was assumed to be obvious. But in my mind at least, it was one big question mark.

Were they telling me to slow down? to quit working so hard? to achieve less?

“Balance” sounded to me like something in the middle—an attempt to be average. It reminded me of when I was a kid, playing with my friend Don Mickle at Churchill Way Park. He and I enjoyed playing on the green wooden seesaw. We would get on opposite ends, and one of us would scoot toward the middle until we balanced perfectly in midair. For a moment, if we had it just right, the seesaw would hang suspended in space. But if one of us shifted, even just a little bit, the heavier end would come slamming down onto the hard asphalt.

So, is that the model for a balanced life—a seesaw? If so, there could be a lot of sore rear ends, because few people are able to keep their seesaws precisely balanced on the fulcrum.

Every time I heard about living a balanced life, I thought, *There has to be a better way to live. Isn't there a different model for a well-lived life?*

As a student of Jesus' teachings, I wondered what he had to say on the matter. After all, churchgoing people seemed especially keen on maintaining a balanced life.

In reading the Bible cover to cover, I found no instruction to balance my life.

But in reading the Bible cover to cover, I found no instruction to balance my life. Moreover, Jesus' life does not seem to have been balanced at all.

He says to take up our crosses and lose our lives. Sacrifice and balance don't blend well. If anything, Jesus encourages radical lives, not balanced ones.

Still, for years I felt guilty that I was not leading a balanced life. There were times when maybe for a short while I thought I might be close to achieving balance, but there were plenty of other times when I had to burn the midnight oil for extended periods, times when my life was anything but balanced.

Even though I could not buy into the ideal of a “balanced life,” it seemed so universally apparent to everyone else that I thought maybe I just wasn’t getting it. My stress increased because I knew I was not living the life I was “supposed” to live, and worse, I wasn’t convinced that balance was a good goal in the first place.

Over the years, I’ve cycled through success and leadership books on how to have a more effective life. I’ve used the latest time-management tools: my schedule has been in Day-Timer and *7 Habits* notebooks, Palms, BlackBerrys, and Outlook software. The books have good points and the systems are helpful, but something was still missing.

A Eureka Moment

A number of years ago, when I was speaking at a leadership conference in New Zealand, I had a eureka moment. Everyone in the room felt overly busy, overly stressed, and overly guilty about not doing everything they thought they should be doing (just like most other people I talk to). A few were close to burnout. In the middle of an open-ended question-and-answer session, someone asked about work/life balance.

As I was answering the questions and drawing concepts on the whiteboard, I had what can only be described as a sudden flash of insight: *Rhythm. Rhythm is a better model than balance.*

I’m not sure exactly how the idea was generated. We were

Your Life in Rhythm

talking about the need for rest and for sabbaticals, but we were also talking about starting new organizations, which requires intense effort. I may have been drawing waves, giving me the idea of the ups and downs of life, when those insights somehow merged and I realized that different seasons of life call for dif-

Different seasons of life call for different kinds of living.

ferent kinds of living. It's not that rest and intensity are to be held in balance at the *same* time but rather that they're to be in rhythm *over* time.

The New Zealanders responded so positively to the idea of rhythm that it surprised me.

Weeks later, my friend Rowland Forman, who had hosted the New Zealand conference, told me that "rhythm" was the leaders' major takeaway. They encouraged me to put the ideas into print. Well, the ideas were not even developed at that point; they were just a flash of insight that had instantly resonated with everyone.

Back in the States, I started working with the idea of rhythm, trying to flesh it out to see if it could possibly replace balance as a fundamental metaphor for a well-ordered

Balance is an inherently stagnant concept, built on preserving a certain tension between fixed objects.

life. I soon found that it was a deep and rich concept that was more than adequate as a governing paradigm. The more I thought about rhythm, the more places I saw it already functioning in my life and in the world

around me. It seemed so obvious that I wondered why someone hadn't hit on this before.

Balance is an inherently stagnant concept, built on preserving a certain tension between fixed objects. Rhythm, on the other hand, *moves*. It happens in time. It's active, just like our

lives, which are not uniform or constant but are always moving and changing.

To develop the concept, I initially didn't have to look any further than my own body. I put my hand on my chest and felt my heart beating in rhythm. I listened to the natural rhythm of my breathing: inhale and exhale. I knew from science classes in my growing-up years that our bodies are filled with natural rhythms. Brain waves, for example, are not supposed to be flat. In fact, that would be a bad sign. We want oscillation: up and down.

Again, it seemed so obvious. Human bodies are rhythmic, and so is life.

An Amazing Scientific Discovery

A few quick Internet searches uncovered a scientific field I had not been aware of: chronobiology, the study of life in time. Over the past several decades, scientists across dozens of disciplines have been discovering the power of rhythm in nature as well as in human bodies. Several major universities (including my alma mater, the University of Texas) now have chronobiology labs, and chronobiology is becoming a fairly common field of study. I was fascinated by what I read, and I began to realize that this is a deep, paradigm-shifting insight for science.

My thoughts ran to the implications for ordinary human life. In our modern world, technological advances—everything from industrialization to hybridization to the lightbulb to high-speed air travel to the Internet—have obscured our intuitive harmony with nature's rhythms.

Sunrise and sunset once bounded our daily lives. Now when it gets dark, we just turn on the lights and keep doing what

In our modern world, technological advances have obscured our intuitive harmony with nature's rhythms.

Your Life in Rhythm

we're doing. We don't have to rely on animals, with their natural rhythms and limitations, or on the natural growing seasons of plants. The kinds of foods we ate once varied by season. Now we eat grapes from California in the summer and grapes from Chile in the winter. And anything else we want can probably be ordered somewhere online, 24/7/365.

In premodern cultures, ordinary people in every part of the world followed the rhythms established by the sun and the moon in relation to the earth. In our day and age, we've lost touch with life's natural rhythms. What has happened to us?

As a pastor, I have seen personal tragedy and triumph up close. I've cheered the restoration of broken lives and cried over the destruction of once-vibrant relationships. I've watched people wasting their lives and overloading their schedules. Too many of my friends are stressed out and guilt ridden, living in self-perceived failure because they can't seem to achieve the mythic goal of a balanced life. Some have imploded into

If everything around us functions according to natural rhythms, why don't we in our everyday lives?

full-blown burnout. The others keep scurrying along, making the best of things.

I began to wonder: If everything around us functions according to natural rhythms, why don't *we* in our everyday lives? What if the myth of "balance" is part of the problem? What if we're aiming at the wrong target?

Early Attempts at Living Rhythmically

At first, I began to apply my early ideas of rhythmic living to my marriage. Tamara and I looked at our patterns of relating to each other in each of nature's cycles. We asked ourselves, *What could we do on a daily and weekly basis to renew and*

enrich our marriage? And then, What about monthly, quarterly, and yearly?

From there, we explored how similar patterns might work in parenting and in our personal spiritual devotions. The results were quite powerful, and I've since extended this exploration into my counseling and consulting with other people in various, very different, life situations. Rhythm is now working for them, too.

Along the way, I've made mistakes. With my particular personality, I tend to overanalyze and overorganize what is really a simple, profound principle. Rhythmic living

Rhythmic living is what humans were doing before they ever learned to write an alphabet or build a village.

is what humans were doing before they ever learned to write an alphabet or build a village. My temptation is to build a system out of it, to chart it and graph it. That can be done—in fact, I personally find it quite helpful—but the beauty of rhythm is that it is fundamental to how we are made to live. The key is to realign ourselves as rhythmic beings in a rhythmic world, not to make up and impose some artificial system.

My wife hates charts and graphs. Even though she loves the idea of rhythm, she thought I was off my rocker trying to map out our lives. She warned me that I was going to spend my whole life planning it and never live it. Tamara and I are wired very differently. And yet we both have benefited from living rhythmically, even though our approaches to rhythm are not at all similar.

Further Discoveries

As I continued to read about rhythm, I ran across Gail Sheehy's pioneering research into adult life stages, which she chronicled

Your Life in Rhythm

in two classic books, *Passages* (1976) and *New Passages* (1995). Though Sheehy doesn't explicitly develop the concept of rhythm, her writing about life stages opened my eyes to how we need to think rhythmically about where we are in life. For example, our lives have a certain rhythm when we're single, but that changes when we get married, have kids, launch our kids from the nest, and ultimately retire and grow old. It seems obvious, yes, but we typically ignore the rhythmic realities of our lives.

In William Doherty's groundbreaking book *The Intentional Family*, I discovered the power of rituals for preserving and enhancing harmonious rhythms in families and marriages. Be-

Because rituals are intrinsically rhythmic, they can easily be aligned with the natural rhythms that structure our world.

cause rituals are intrinsically rhythmic, they can easily be aligned with the natural rhythms that structure our world.

Elite athletes understand rhythm.

They have figured out the power of interval training, which "mixes bouts of work and rest in timed intervals."¹ In *The Power of Full Engagement*, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz show the brilliance of *oscillation*, "the rhythmic, wavelike movement between activity and rest."² In their words, "Oscillation . . . represents the fundamental pulse of life."³ Oscillation works physically, mentally, and spiritually. Loehr and Schwartz's insight helped me understand in another way how rhythm is superior to balance as the fundamental metaphor for a well-lived life. "Healthy patterns of activity and rest lie at the heart of our capacity for full engagement, maximum performance, and sustained health."⁴ Full engagement comes from oscillating between high performance and personal renewal.

Early Responses

Early on, I presented these ideas to the all-female staff of a large Mom's-Day-Out program—primarily young women with little children, some working part-time, some single, some married, some divorced, some in other relationships. They quickly agreed that excess stress, busyness, and guilt were major concerns in their lives. They also agreed that trying to achieve balance in their lives had failed to really help them. And they immediately embraced the concept of rhythm. They said it gave them freedom, releasing them from the burdensome expectations they had placed on themselves to try to live an idealistic, balanced life. Subsequently, the program director, Molly Ducote, sent me a note that said, “As a single mom, especially, I know that this book is going to make a difference. . . . Just the small speech you gave my staff changed their lives.”

Moving Forward

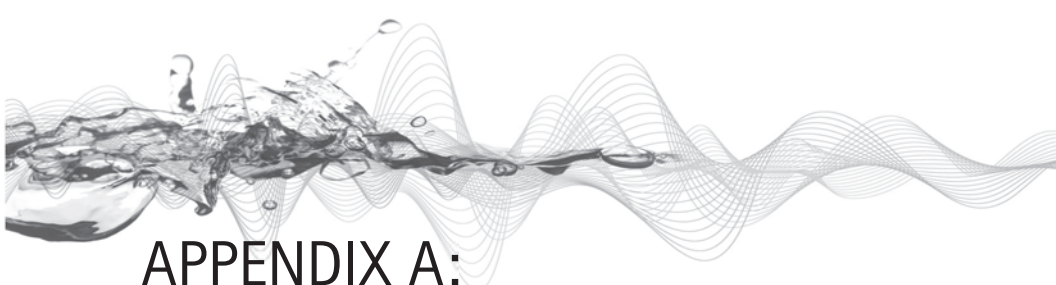
I'll be honest: I don't have this rhythm approach fully figured out. So far, I've experimented enough to feel its transforming power, and I've seen it work in several key areas of my own life and the life of my family. But it's still in its early stages. Perhaps you and others will develop the concept of a rhythmic life in places and dimensions I've not yet imagined. I have already seen that rhythm is a highly generative idea that touches many spheres of life.

Stop asking, “Is my life in balance?” and start asking, “Am I in a good rhythm?”

I invite you to join me in exploring your life in rhythm. As more of us seek to live rhythmically, together we will recover what we've lost in our inane attempts to achieve balance, and we'll find new ways to live in harmony with our rhythmic world.

Your Life in Rhythm

This is a powerful shift—one you will suspect you had in mind all along but had not yet put into words. I encourage you to stop asking, “Is my life in balance?” and start asking, “Am I in a good rhythm?”



APPENDIX A: Scheduling Your Life Events in Chronos Cycles

Most people have trouble thinking of their lives in terms of the five chronos cycles unless they write something down. To help you organize your thoughts as you begin to make the shift from balance to rhythm, I've included some fill-in charts on the next several pages.

For each of the five chronos cycles, list activities in your life that are common to that cycle. As you fill in the information, be sure to think of examples in all your life roles or stewardships—parent, student, employer, employee, manager, friend, volunteer, church member, citizen, neighbor. Most people find it helpful to zero in on one life role in terms of how

Your Life in Rhythm

they can live that role well in each cycle. You don't have to look at each cycle for every role. Focus on the ones that are most central to your life. For one cycle, you might want to consider your business role, and in another, look through the lens of your family role. The point is to begin to see your roles and responsibilities (your stewardships) from a rhythmic perspective. For each cycle, list your pace (a recurring activity), rituals (a life-enhancing habit or tradition), and oscillations (a deliberate time of either intense exertion or personal renewal).

Don't become overwhelmed. This exercise is intended to set you free, not put you in bondage. Each chart is designed to stimulate your thinking about the activities of your life that fit that cycle. I encourage you to pick one cycle and try one exercise to see if it helps you improve your life. Later, once you've seen how this tool works to improve your life, you can do more.

My Personal Annual Flow

On the chart below, create an annual cycle for your life. For each month, record activities and events that affect the flow of your life. See pages 230–231 for examples of annual rhythms.

Month	Annual Rhythms
JANUARY	
FEBRUARY	
MARCH	
APRIL	
MAY	
JUNE	
JULY	
AUGUST	
SEPTEMBER	
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	

Annual Rhythms

Cycles typically have a flow, a recurring pattern. Understanding the flow of a year is particularly powerful because many of us have a hard time seeing a whole year at one time. Think through the cycle of the year. When does it start and end? When are the busy and the slow times? What activities or events demand your time?

EXAMPLES OF ANNUAL RHYTHMS

Holidays: New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Halloween, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Boxing Day

Family: birthdays, wedding anniversaries, vacations, camping, summer camps, reunions, graduations, anniversaries of deaths or tragedies

Home: spring-cleaning, planting the garden, sealing the driveway, harvesting the garden, fall cleanup

School: first day, open house, Christmas break, spring break, graduation, summer vacation, buying school supplies and clothes, preseason workouts for sports/band/drill team/cheerleading

Religious: Lent, Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Passover, Ramadan, mission trips, pilgrimages

Government: taxes, registrations, renewing licenses, inspections

Cultural/Societal: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, May Day, Cinco de Mayo, D-Day, Juneteenth, Pearl Harbor Day

Work: company picnic, conferences, trade shows, planning/
budgeting, employee reviews, training, fiscal year end,
seasonal sales spikes or slumps, Administrative Assistant
Day, Boss's Day

Sports: training camp, off-season conditioning, special camps,
opening day, draft day, play-offs, championship, all-star
game, qualifying events

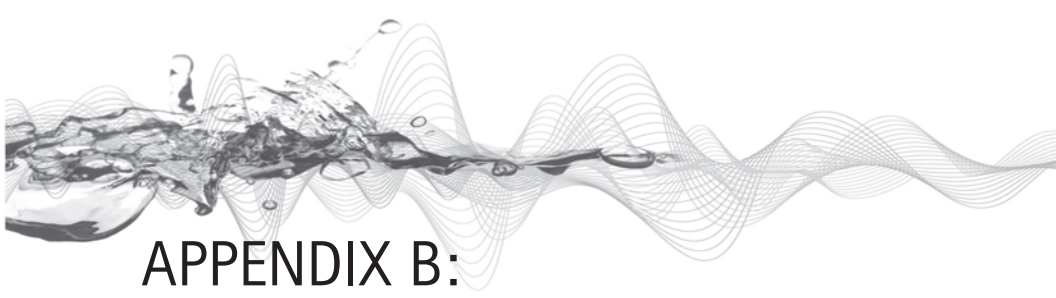
Seasonal sports: football, basketball, baseball, soccer, track,
volleyball, wrestling, hockey, snow skiing, water skiing,
triathlons, marathons, Kentucky Derby, Indy 500,
Daytona 500, Ironman Hawaii, Super Bowl, World Series,
March Madness, Final Four, Stanley Cup, World Cup

Health: physical exam, dental cleaning, eye exam,
mammogram, age-related tests; allergies, arthritis,
seasonal affective disorder

Hobbies: shows, competitions, conventions

Food: picnics, cookouts, traditional holiday foods, seasonal
fruits and vegetables

Entertainment: Academy Awards, Oscars, Grammys, summer
blockbusters, holiday movies, favorite TV shows



APPENDIX B:

Rhythm Solution Process Worksheets

To help you apply the six rhythm strategies to your life, I suggest you work through a Rhythm Solution Process using the worksheets on the next pages.

Start by identifying a problem you're facing—at home, work, school, or wherever—and write a brief description.

Next, identify your personal seasons and life stage. These provide the context for applying the six rhythm strategies.

Evaluate the *kairos* and *chronos* rhythm strategies to see which one (or ones) will offer the most help for your particular problem. Usually, one to three strategies will directly address a given problem. It may be possible to apply all six strategies to your situation, but that is usually overkill. Most people can take

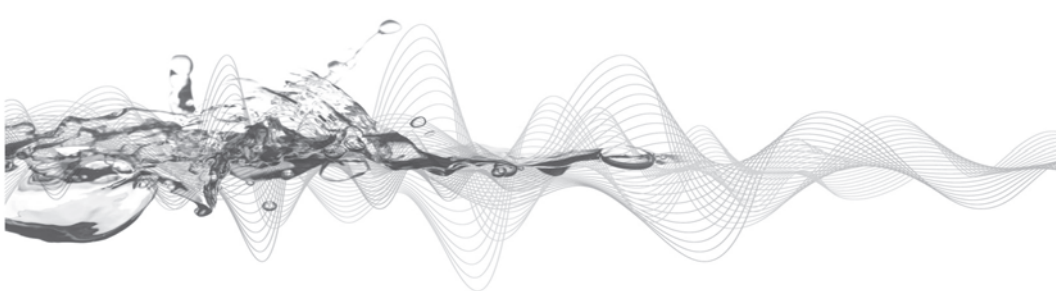
Your Life in Rhythm

only one or two action steps at any given time, so even if you find a solution that involves multiple steps, I strongly suggest you start with just one or two of the most powerful steps and then move to the next ones as needed.

To apply the three kairos rhythm strategies, answer the following questions: What expectations can I release to achieve peace amid my circumstances? What opportunities can I seize to find fulfillment in my current situation? In what ways can I begin to anticipate what's next, in order to build hope?

To apply the three chronos rhythm strategies, answer the following questions: How can I pace myself to achieve optimum frequency and flow? How can I build rituals (traditions and habits) that will enhance my life? How can I oscillate between work and rest to take full advantage of both?

If you need more worksheets, they are available to download for free at www.yourlifeinrhythm.com.



Questions for Group Discussion and Personal Reflection

Introduction

1. Why are you interested in reading this book?
2. What questions do you have about the book?
3. What issues do you hope the book will address?
4. What objections or concerns do you have even before you've read it?
5. What do you hope you will get out of it?

Part I: Rhythm

1. Why do you think balance is such a popular idea?
2. What problems do you see with the concept of balance?
3. What makes rhythm such a powerful alternative to balance?
4. What about rhythm is attractive to you?
5. What are the differences between the two kinds of rhythm: *chronos* and *kairos*? Give some examples.
6. What have you gained from the book thus far?

Notes

Introduction: The Burden of “Balance”

1. Stephen R. Covey, “Work-Life Balance: A Different Cut,” *Forbes*, March 21, 2007, http://www.forbes.com/careers/2007/03/19/covey-work-life-lead-careers-worklife07-cz_sc_0319covey.html.
2. Jim Bird, “Work-Life Balance: Doing It Right and Avoiding the Pitfalls,” *WorkLifeBalance.com*, 2006, <http://www.worklifebalance.com/assets/pdfs/article3.pdf>.

Chapter 1: How I Got Rhythm

1. “What Is Fitness?” *The CrossFit Journal*, October 2002, 4, <http://library.crossfit.com/free/pdf/CFJ-trial.pdf>.
2. Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 30.
3. *Ibid.*, 29.
4. *Ibid.*, 30.

Chapter 2: Our Busy Lives and the Burden of Balance

1. Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Fireside, 1994), 119.

Chapter 4: Kairos and Chronos Rhythms

1. Over the centuries, the words’ fields of meaning shifted slightly. In ancient Greece, *chronos* and *kairos* were more distinct; later, they tended to overlap as nearly synonymous, such as in the New Testament.
2. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993), 3:488–489.
3. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, electronic edition, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Geoffrey Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 9:593.
4. *Ibid.*, 3:455–464.
5. See 2 Timothy 4:6; Luke 1:20.

Chapter 5: Your Personal Seasons and Life Stages

1. Choon-Leong Seow, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 171.



About the Author

Bruce and his wife, Tamara, were married in 1983 and have been blessed with five children, four boys and one girl. Bruce is an avid racquetball player. He is also an entrepreneur and backpacker.

Bruce graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in Plan II, the Honors Liberal Arts Program ('82); received a master's degree in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary ('86); and did postgraduate work at the University of Texas at Dallas in the History of Ideas (focus on philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and postmodernism). He taught theology for four years at Dallas Seminary.

In 1997 Bruce led a team to found McKinney Fellowship in McKinney, Texas (www.McKinneyFellowship.org). McKinney Fellowship grew rapidly, and Bruce continues to serve as senior pastor.

Your Life in Rhythm

Bruce speaks and consults. He founded the Center for Church-Based Training and served as Chairman of the Board for twelve years (www.ccbt.org). Recently he helped form 3E McKinney, which is a multichurch, nonprofit organization created to aid and equip those who are less fortunate in the surrounding community (www.3emckinney.org).

He has also coauthored a book entitled *The Leadership Baton*, available in Spanish and Portuguese.

If you want to know more about rhythm and how to apply it in your life, business, or organization, contact Bruce Miller at www.yourlifeinrhythm.com.

The Web site includes

- More articles on rhythm
- Examples of how rhythm has been applied
- Exercises and worksheets that extend the concept of rhythm
- An FAQ section
- Information on rhythm seminars and consulting
- Bruce's blog