

# From Juggling to Balancing Life: Concepts, Strategies, and Coping Skills

In our lives we learn to juggle the multiple identities that make up who we are: *daughter, sons, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, partners, friends, bosses, employees, students, teachers...*

Just stop and think for a moment, how many identities do you have? Take me for instance: I am a daughter, a sister, a fiancée, a friend, a therapist, a boss, a student, an advocate ... a woman.

Most of our identities are in relation to others, and each of them have their own set of responsibilities attached.

*For example, a working wife and mother has three identities right there: wife to her partner, mother to her children, and employee (not to count daughter, friend, potentially sister/PTA member...).* The question is, where is her relationship to self?

Sometimes we are so caught up juggling our responsibilities in relation to others that we forget about our responsibilities to ourselves.

**So how can we move from juggling to balancing?**



**Awareness:** The first thing is to become aware of the different identities that make up whom we are and understand that their order of priority can be fluid.

Let's go back to the identities that make up who I am: there are times within a day, or sometimes entire days, when being a therapist, business owner, and a PhD candidate take priority over the other identities, and I find myself allocating more time and attention to the responsibilities associated to those identities compared to others. However, after a certain time of the day, the order of priority may change. For instance, once I get home my fiancée identity often takes priority, and I turn off working mode and spending time with my partner. Other times I prioritize being Patricia, in which case I focus on my relationship to self.

**Prioritize, Communicate, Share responsibilities:** You are awesome, but you are also human!

Note which identities need to take priority today, this week, this month. Once you are aware of them, communicate with your support system (partner, family, friends, co-workers), allowing them to know what you would like or need from them.

Contrary to popular belief, people cannot read minds, and when there is no communication, all they can do is guess what you want or need, and act upon their guesses. The only problem with that is that their guesses come from their wants and needs, which can be the complete opposite of what you would want or need.

**Self-Care:** Think of self-care as a want: a way for you to strengthen your relationship to self. You spend so much time thinking about your responsibilities to your family, your work, your friends, and your community, that you deserve your time for self. This is the most important relationship of all. To move from juggling to balancing, we must learn to attend to self as much as we do to others. A way of doing so is by implementing A2C's Need-To-Want ratio:

**Need-to-Want Ratio:** When we are juggling responsibilities, we tend to focus on what we need to do and often forget, overlook, or even cancel the things we want to do. This creates a lack of balance in our lives. To help bring balance back, A2C has developed the Need-to-Want Ratio.

We have many needs in our lives, which represent our responsibility, and we often sacrifice the things we want to do in order to accomplish what we need to do. With the Need-to-Want Ratio, you get to do both. Start by determining the average number of needs you would like to accomplish to get a want. You can do that by creating a to-do list of your needs either for the day or for the week. This list allows you to prioritize your needs, track them by check marking as you accomplished them, and implement a want in between the needs.

In my case, I have implemented a 5:1 ratio. I know I want to go to the gym, eat healthy, and be able to have time to enjoy my coffee. I usually try to start the day with a want by going to the gym before heading to work. After accomplishing 5 needs from my to-do list, I allow myself to have another want and go to a cafe where I can eat a delicious parfait while listening to music. Afterwards, I return to my needs, and once I have accomplished another 5 of them, I get to take another break to have my coffee.

The needs or wants may be big or small, and the ratio can fluctuate, but what's important is to make sure that we implement a balance in our lives.

I hope these have been helpful. Remember, you have the ability to choose which identity you want or need to prioritize, even when it feels like that choice is being taken away or seems to be non-existent, it is there and it is yours.