

Hello everyone,

Today's column is about balance. We need balance in our lives. There are so many kinds of balance that several on-line dictionaries revealed over ten definitions. Even Wikipedia has 11 non-obsolete definitions.

A key form of balance for me is that between the familiar tried and true and the choice not yet discovered. This can also be a balance between clinging to what we've known so well and being open to the changes to the status quo.

I've done a few out-of-the-ordinary things this year. My favorite was a Tropical Dance Vacation in St. Croix during Seattle's Snowmageddon. This was a fine balance between the tried and true familiar fun of contra dancing at night and previously unknown tropical adventures during the day.

When we consider balance on a personal, physical plane, it is certainly central to mobility. We can do exercises to increase our balance, such as standing on one leg at a time. Balancing on one foot requires the use of many many little muscles to keep us upright. If you lack sufficient balance on your own, you may need an external aid such as a cane or crutches; even walking sticks for hiking aid in balance. Holding hands with one's neighbors in a circle or line dance can help too.

Our bodies do so many things for us to keep things in balance and regulate systems such as blood sugar, hormones, blood cell counts, inner ear, heartbeats, breathing. Think of how much work it would be to do that all consciously!

Another meaning of balance is reflected in trade-offs such as a life/work balance or balancing between wants and needs, one's own needs and those of others around us, eating and exercise. Each of these pairs gets set differently by each of us at our own preference, and reworked consciously or unconsciously as our needs and situations change.

In researching definitions of balance, I found a link discussing the difference between balance and change, two topics I enjoy exploring. I had to chuckle a little because I hadn't even thought of it in monetary terms as the link did, where change is the amount you receive back for paying in excess, and balance is the amount you need to pay to clear a debt.

Certain forms of dance include a step called a balance. In contra dance there is often a balance before a partner swing. What is a balance? Here it is a change of direction, a new impetus to movement, a step forward and back, leading to and anticipatory to a swing. What does the balance add to the dance? It's a moment of connection, not just for the couple but for the line and the whole room. It can provide a feeling of unity.

I wonder if some imbalance in our lives is important too, to help create momentum.

What role does folk dance have in your life, and is it in balance with your objectives? If you want more, just check the calendar and schedules of regular events in the back of the Northwest Folkdancer and go forth and enjoy.