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Book Review: Beyond Juggling

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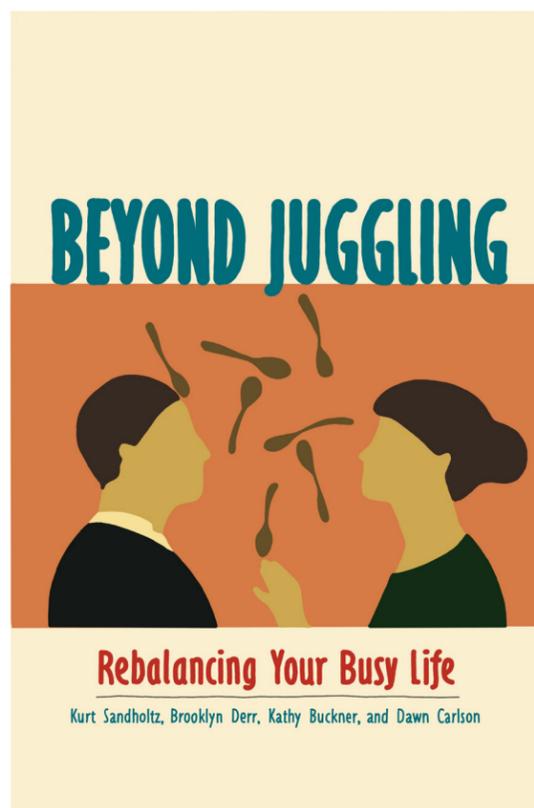
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MARRIOTT STUDENT **Book** REVIEWS



Beyond Juggling: Rebalancing Your Busy Life

By Kurt Sandholtz, Brooklyn Derr,
Kathy Buckner, and Dawn Carlson

San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler
Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Book Review by Marianna Richardson

Contemporary adults often feel like a juggler keeping multiple balls up in the air, frantically trying not to let one ball drop. Or, they try to balance their external and internal lives equally, like an acrobat standing precariously on a board placed on a ball, teetering from side to side trying not to come crashing down onto the floor. The authors of *Beyond Juggling* do not think modern life is a hopeless morass of struggle and stress. The aim of *Beyond Juggling* is to help you, the reader, rebalance your life by achieving three objectives:

1. Understand how you are currently juggling between work and non-work and the reasons why you juggle.
2. Examine five alternatives to juggling and gauge your aptitude for each strategy by taking a series of tests that are found in the book.
3. Plan to rebalance your life incorporating the various strategies outlined in the book.

As you read the book and take the tests, you may experience moments of self-discovery as you pinpoint your own strengths in these alternatives to juggling:

Alternating. In this strategy, a person focuses on work, then focuses on relationships and self-care. Students are often in the alternating situation where they alternate between periods of high-stress and long study hours.

Then, they have breaks from school when they try to enjoy long periods of sleep, family time, and recreation. In alternating, a person must determine if sacrificing time with family, friends, and self-care is worth the period of focus on hard work.

Outsourcing. With some planning and money, people can have someone else do parts of their life that they don't want to do, so they have more time to work on things they enjoy. For example, Jane, a busy CEO of a small start-up, may have someone else clean her home so that she has more time to work and to be with her family. But despite the amazing benefits, Jane must plan (which takes time and money) to guarantee these tasks are done and done right. Also, Jane can't effectively outsource building family relationships. She still needs to find the time to do that herself.

Bundling. – The principle of bundling is to combine or try to get more out of each activity or event in your life. Mothers often use this strategy to rebalance their lives. For example, when a mom is going shopping, she may take a child with her to have a one-on-one conversation with the child. She might also plan a luncheon date with a friend in the same part of town that she has a doctor's appointment. When bundling, it is important to neither lose the ability to enjoy the moment nor become frustrated when you cannot bundle every activity.

Techflexing. Using technology to streamline life is becoming commonplace. Ordering groceries online and working from home while having Web meetings and conference calls with co-workers are only a couple of examples. The drawbacks and benefits of techflexing are dependent upon the person and the situation. One person may enjoy the peace and quiet of commuting in a car, while another person might want to work from home and eliminate the commute. The goal of techflexing is making technology your servant, not your master.

Simplifying. – Simplifying may mean giving up worldly success and fancier things for other priorities. For example, parents may opt to have a more modest home and cars, as well as less stressful, time-consuming jobs, in order to spend more time with their kids. Simplifying is a give and take strategy; it takes practice and a determination to stick with your priorities.

For each strategy, the authors give real-life examples to help the reader relate and apply the rebalancing techniques. For example, Jared and Monica are both professors at a university with a toddler son, Sam. They try to keep Sam in the campus day-care center for as little time as possible by alternating their work schedules, doing some techflexing, and outsourcing when necessary. Jared and Monica do whatever they need to do to keep all their balls in the air.

The problem with life's juggling act is that "solving the balance dilemma is a never-ending process." There are many possible scenarios that can disrupt our delicate balancing act, such as a lost job, a new baby, or a desperately sick spouse. As life throws us a new challenge, we can readjust our balancing plan and select other strategies that will enable us to handle our new normal.

Each person's situation is unique. A rebalancing strategy should be tailored to your specific needs. The authors' hope is that after you read the book, "you will adopt something – an idea, a framework, an example – that helps you get beyond juggling on the journey to a richer, more satisfying life."

Dr. Sandholtz is a professor at the Marriott School of Business.