The Wheel of Life - Finding Fulfillment and Harmony

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Guest: David Lowry, Don Drew

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David Lowry: 0:29

Welcome to Peaceful Life Radio, your place on the internet for cultivating a more peaceful life. I'm David Lowry, and joining me today is my co host Don Drew. How's it going, Don? Doing really well, David. What are we talking about today?

Don Drew: 0:44

We're diving into a powerful self assessment tool called the Wheel of Life. This simple yet insightful framework can help us identify areas in our lives that are thriving and areas which might need some attention. Understanding our current balance allows us to set goals and make positive changes that cultivate greater peace and fulfillment, which is really what we're all about. So David, are we ready to explore the wheel of life?

David Lowry: 1:08

I am, but before we do, I want our listeners to know how much we appreciate them for liking, subscribing, and downloading our podcast. It really helps. And please let others know that we're here. Okay, Don, let's get started. I'll ask you a question. What are we talking about? The wheel of life?

Don Drew: 1:30

We're looking at a more integrated life that considers aspects such as health, spirituality, work careers, and so on. The wheel of life covers eight individual areas, and we're going to be talking about each of those today.

David Lowry: 1:42

And for some of you who are really high achievers, you can find these wheels of life on the internet. Type in the word wheel of life, go to images and you'll see what we're talking .About And there's different wheels. Our wheel is going to be different than some others that are out there. Don, how does this wheel help us cultivate a peaceful life?

Don Drew: 2:03

The wheel of life is a visualization tool used for self assessment and coaching. It helps us understand how balanced and fulfilled we are in important aspects of our lives. Common categories include career, finances, health, relationships, personal growth, fun and recreation, physical environment, and spirituality. There are two main key elements to the wheel of life. The first are life categories. The wheel is divided into wedges or sections, each representing a core area of life. The second major element is a self-rating element where you think about yourself and where you fall in each of these eight categories. Each category is assigned a rating based on a current level of satisfaction in that area. This rating is typically a number from 1 to 10, or a position on a scale, very unsatisfied to very satisfied.

David Lowry: 2:50

It's our way of helping you identify imbalances you may have. Think of these categories and realize that some of them work with each other and others of them are independent, but you can see how much balance you have in your life. Use it to help you set goals and prioritize your life.

Don Drew: 3:09

David, how does the Wheel of Life relate to cultivating peace in one's life?

David Lowry: 3:13

A peaceful life is built upon habits that we cultivate. Of course, we could go all the way back to Aristotle who talked about this middle course path that where we shouldn't give ourselves to excess on either side. For instance, being humorous is a great idea, but being a buffoon is not a great idea. And certainly having no sense of humor is not going to work well for us. So, the more balanced we are with our lives and the major things that we're called upon to do. The more likely it is we're going to have a peaceful life,

Don Drew: 3:43

We can start by identifying some of the imbalances we have, prioritizing and goal setting for ourselves, learning better acceptance of our life situation, have more gratitude for those things we have, and be more mindful and self aware. The wheel of life can help in all of these areas. Let's get onto our first topic, which is career or work vocation on the wheel of life. How does one find balance in career?

David Lowry: 4:09

First of all, we want to evaluate, and this should make sense to you if we're cultivating peace in our life, is job satisfaction. You should be happy in your job. Now, this doesn't mean that you should agree with everything your boss says and does, or that your workplace is always right, and that you have to be a total slave to your job or anything. But let's face it. We spend eight hours a day and sometimes more with our jobs and if it's not very satisfying, we're probably not very peaceful, so we want to have job satisfaction.. There are other areas as well, such as fulfillment. Do you feel like you're doing something worthy of those time, talents, and abilities that you have?

Don Drew: 4:50

Then, of course, there's growth opportunities. Does our current role offer opportunities to learn new skills and advance our career? And do we have enough time for personal life and activities outside of work? This reminds me of some of the work that I've done in motivation related to Frederick Herzberg's work . Those things that really motivate and satisfy us in work are things like finding meaning and purpose and growth. Those are vitally important to feeling good about what you're doing and ultimately to finding balance. And personal growth is right at the top of that list.

David Lowry: 5:19

So, if we're going to have a job, let's do something that makes us feel satisfied. Don, of the four things we mentioned, job satisfaction, a sense of fulfillment, growth

opportunities, or work-life balance, which one do you gravitate to the most? Knowing there's no correct answer here.

Don Drew: 5:36

It's a really difficult question. I've worked with a lot of senior executives that are struggling with their careers. They're successful at what they do in terms of the money that they make or the corporate outcomes they get, but quite often they're missing work-life balance to find more time for themselves. In other cases, it could be the sense of fulfillment.

David Lowry: 5:55

For me, it would be fulfillment and growth opportunities. But that's just me.

Don Drew: 6:01

Let's talk about how we can actually enact a greater level of a balance in our careers.

David Lowry: 6:06

We can define what our ideal work environment would be like. Sometimes we do our jobs, but haven't put a lot of time or energy into thinking how could we make this better? What would I want my environment to look like? And it could be something as simple as the way you organize your surroundings, or maybe it's time to reorganize what you do and how you do it. Maybe you've been doing your job the same way for too long, and you haven't been innovative, or you haven't thought about it. And the other thing is, always be open in your communication with others. Communicate with your manager, your colleagues, and people such as that.

Don Drew: 6:41

So, at the end, we've got to remember that balance doesn't necessarily mean a 50-50 split between work and life. It's really about finding a sustainable rhythm that allows you to thrive in both areas and reduces work related stress. By prioritizing your well-being and taking proactive steps, you can cultivate a career that will contribute to your overall sense of peace and fulfillment. Let's move on to the next one, David, talking about finances. How can we measure finances on the wheel of life and find peace?

David Lowry: 7:10

We know that finances are very important. I believe that making money is good and more money is even better. It shouldn't be the end goal of everything that's important to us, but we can't ignore it either. One of the ways of finding balance in our financial areas is to make sure that we're careful with our income versus what we're spending. A lot of people struggle with this. As a young person, I remember having a lot of credit card debt because my wants exceeded what I made and I racked up quite a bit of debt over the years buying this or that thing and not being very careful. The older I am, I pay off those balances really fast. We're talking about learning to find peace with the income you make, learning how to enjoy the money you make without overspending. Watching your income and expenses and learning to be happy with the money you make, it's one of the best things in the world not to have to worry about your money.

Don Drew: 8:10

I think another area that needs to be given attention is savings. Now, I'm not talking about investing or retirement planning or anything like that, but one of the most useful things we can do for ourselves is establish a baseline of savings so that when we have that occasional financial crisis, and I've been through it I don't know how many times, we've got a little bit of money in savings that we can use to cover that crisis. It helps us find a greater level of peace because we're not scrambling around trying to figure out how we're going to pay our regular monthly bills and come up with the extra cash that we need.

David Lowry: 8:42

Don, I know you're not a financial planner, but you have been successful with the money you've made over the years. What are some strategies you might recommend for those struggling with debt?

Don Drew: 8:52

As far as debt is concerned, all of us probably fall prey to that at some time. It's really important to pay attention to how much debt you're taking on. And in this age of higher interest rates the cost of borrowing money is just becoming greater. So we need to all be more careful and conscious of how we take on debt. But the truth is sometimes we do have to take on debt. And if we get ourselves in a situation where we're racking up too much debt and we want to start paying some of that off, there's a very simple strategy that's been around for years and that is to focus on your smallest bills first. Try to pay those off, pay off as much and as quick as you can, and then take that same amount of money and apply to the next bill. I've had to do that twice in my life. It's been a long time since I had to do it, but I had to do it twice. And it's what saved my financial bacon, so to speak.

David Lowry: 9:41

Another thing you can do is create a budget and become very careful about logging your expenses. This way you can learn those budget bandits that are out there. Maybe you're spending a little more each week than you should on some treat for yourself when you'd be as satisfied if you made something at home.

Don Drew: 10:01

Remember that financial balance is a journey, it's not a destination. For most of us, we're never going to arrive at a point where we just can't think about it at all. But instituting smart approaches in our relationship with money can really help, especially to cover unexpected events and adjustments along the way.

David Lowry: 10:18

Our next one we want to talk about is your health. You need to cultivate a balance for your overall well-being. We've talked many times about health and taking care of your physical needs. So Don, what are some things that we should be focusing on are key factors here when we talk about health and well-being?

Don Drew: 10:37

Most experts I think would tell you that the two primary areas of concern are going to be diet and exercise. What we take into our bodies and how we use our bodies to build it up. And I haven't even told you this, David, because it just happened today, but I found out that I'm going to have shoulder surgery because of an injury to my rotator cuff and you're right in my room. Yeah. But I was told by the physician and the physical therapist that I actually had a tremendously good range of motion and a lot of strength in our arm where most people would not have that. And I attribute that to the fact that I regularly exercise my arms and so on. And so they were already in good shape when they got injured.

David Lowry: 11:14

That's important. You've got to be careful about your diet, your nutrition. and your exercise, but we don't want to forget also your mental health because your mood, stress levels, your emotional wellbeing are all very important. So, you need to be honest with yourself. If you're experiencing anxiety, depression, or feel like you have a mental health challenge, do something about that. You can't have a happy life if your brain isn't cooking enough chemistry for you. Do it for yourself and the people you love. Don't put that off any longer. You might be surprised at how easily it could be managed if you'll just talk to a healthcare professional. It doesn't have to be overly expensive. If you should need it, a lot of medications today, are very, very affordable. So look into those things if you need to. as well as taking care of your physical well-being.

Don Drew: 12:06

Good balance in health is about progress, not perfection. There's going to be days when you fall short of your goals. The key is to develop healthy habits. Be kind to yourself, and focus on making sustainable improvements over time. By prioritizing a healthy lifestyle, you can cultivate a strong foundation for overall well-being and a greater sense of peace in your life. Okay, David, let's talk about relationships on the wheel of life.

David Lowry: 12:30

I think that's probably my favorite place to hang out. I actually believe that most of our problems of happiness and cultivating a peaceful life stem from this area of quality relationships. I believe that with all of my heart. We've got to take care of our connections with other people. If you're angry with three quarters of the people you meet, or if you have this pessimistic attitude about 17 people in your office every day that you see, you're not going to be happy. You've got to learn how to manage your side of the fence and take that emphasis off of other people. There's many things we can do to foster good relationships. But let's look at some key factors.

Don Drew: 13:12

There's many factors involved in relationships. I just want to mention a few, and I'd like to spend time talking about how to prioritize improvements in these areas. One, is the time we spend with others, the quality not just the quantity. Both are important. Then, how we communicate, how are supported by others, areas like conflict resolution. When we get in relationships, we're going to have conflicts of various kinds and how we respond to that, how we maintain, how we move forward with relationships becomes

critically important. And then lastly, a sense of belonging that we can have as part of a group of friends and how important that really is.

David Lowry: 13:50

One of my friends one time gave me a perfect piece of advice. When I've done it, my relationships have been better and when I haven't done it, they go stale. Always give your partner something to look forward to. Have something coming up. Have a trip, have something you're going to do at the end of the week, an event, a picnic, something, anything. Be inventive, be thoughtful. The other thing I think is so very important is that we do something each day for the people that we love. Make up that bed by yourself without being asked. Clear the table. Do the dishes. Show your love language in very concrete ways. Maybe your partner is used to helping you and you do things together. Take it over one day and say, you relax while I do all of this. What I'm trying to say, Don, is show your partner that you care for them. That will increase your peace, tranquility, your happiness in your relationship.

Don Drew: 14:45

And you do that by prioritizing time with them. Right. Absolutely. I'm going to talk about a couple of things that are actually in your area of expertise, communication, but I want to emphasize the importance of being an active listener. We probably fail at good listening skills more than any other communication mode there is. Paying attention, giving our attention to somebody in the moment, being in the moment with them helps a lot. And then of course on the communication side in terms of what we are wanting to communicate to others, be able to communicate openly and honestly about what we're feeling, what we're thinking, their feelings and so on. And yet at the same time, we need to be able to say what we need to say to our friends and our loved ones.

David Lowry: 15:27

Don, I believe that open, honest, and transparent communication. Honestly, if you're afraid to hand your phone over to your partner, you've probably got a transparency problem. Your partner should be able to look on your computer, your desk drawers and not be upset or disturbed. It's important our partners know they can trust us, feel that we're always honest and transparent with us. It's about having a relationship that's intimate, inviting, warm and comforting and creates peace, not only for ourselves, but our partners as well.

Don Drew: 15:58

David, when we talk about relationships, usually we're thinking about, as you mentioned, partners or family members or friends. Talk to us for just a minute about nurturing different relationships. Relationship with new people, people who are different than what we're normally used to being with and so on.

David Lowry: 16:14

I love that you asked that question because the world is full of relationships. And I heard someone say the other day, it's a cultural saying in different parts of the world, that the guest is God. The guest is God. Now, what they're trying to get you to see in that is, is that the people we meet, even if they're very modest, are very important to us. We

should treat all people, even those we don't agree with or want to spend much time with, as important and meaningful. Have meaningful lives. We can come to appreciate them as much as we can and be available for them in ways that's appropriate. I have so many different kinds of friends, people that are very similar to me and people who are far different from me. But I love them nonetheless. Relationships make the world go around and your life so much richer. Many people are excluding other people because they're not like them. But if you turn that around and say, the more people I meet, the more rich my life will be, you might be surprised at how people who are very different from you, maybe aren't that different after all.

Don Drew: 17:24

Let's move on to the next spoke on the wheel of life, and that's personal growth. In this section we are reflecting on our commitment to self improvement and lifelong learning. It encompasses our pursuit of knowledge, skill development, and exploration of new experiences that could contribute to our own fulfillment and purpose. Let's take a look at a few of those key factors.

David Lowry: 17:44

One of the things we can do is set some goals to learn new things. Maybe you want to learn more about cooking. I bought a Traeger grill so I could learn how to smoke meat a little bit more. And I've never done that before, but man, I love eating barbecue. And, I want to learn more about that. I know that Don is a very curious guy and he has lots of interest. What are some things you've had a fleeting interest or dabbled in?

Don Drew: 18:11

Well, when I was 62, I believe I started another master's degree just because I was interested in that topic and I completed that. And then I rolled right into some study in marriage and family therapy. I got really interested in different kinds of therapy that are out there. You taught me a little bit about carpentry when we were doing some work here a few years ago. That was very enriching for me, and my interests just go every which direction.

David Lowry: 18:37

He loves to travel. He's going to Japan soon. You challenge yourself is what I'm saying.

Don Drew: 18:43

Again, it's all part of this work-life balance. I am now officially retired, so I don't have a full time job teaching like I have in the past. So, I'm having to reevaluate my work-life balance because if I'm not careful, it can become all life balance all on the life side. But that work part is really important to me. It's important that I stretch myself and not just spend all my time fishing. You know what I mean?

David Lowry: 19:05

Exactly! Work-life balance, particularly when it comes to personal growth, is more of a journey, and when something looks interesting, don't be afraid to explore it and learn something about it.

Don Drew: 19:16

Yeah. Before we move on, let me just throw out one more idea here. And that is that there is a wealth of educational or specialized programs out there on the internet that are, in many cases, free. I'd encourage you to get out there and take a look at what's out there in the world. Try something new. Try something you never thought you would.

David Lowry: 19:33

Let's move on to our next topic, which is even more fun. It's called Fun and Recreation.

Don Drew: 19:39

This section of the Wheel of Life reflects on our ability to unwind, recharge, and engage in activities we enjoy. It's all about incorporating leisure pursuits that bring us joy, reduce stress, and ultimately contribute to our overall wellbeing. So, let's take a look at a few of the factors. One of these is time commitment. For most of us, we're really good about prioritizing work or work things, things that we have to do around the house and so on. Fun is the same thing. If we don't assign time to it, if we don't commit time to it, it will slip away from us. So identifying time, specific time to do fun things or to do things for our own recreation is one of the best things we can do to help improve that station on the wheel of life.

David Lowry: 20:23

Now, I know some of you might be thinking you mean people don't take time out for fun? But let me tell you, Don and I know tons of people who never take time out for fun. And guess what, Don? It shows up in their faces. They're uptight. They're wound tight. They don't seem to get a joke when you tell it to them. They've no sense of humor. And the reason is they've not had time to breathe, relax, to take a moment to enjoy themselves. They've forgotten how to play.

Don Drew: 20:53

Many of us also have things we've been interested in the past that we let go of. I am actually a certified rescue scuba diver, but I haven't done it in years because I haven't lived anywhere near water and I'm didn't want to spend all my money traveling to do that. But for a number of years, I was very involved in diving. Well, I don't really feel a strong urge to go back to that, but many of our listeners might have something they did in the past. They really enjoyed, and they might want to go back to that and revisit it. Maybe approach it in different ways. That's one of the things that we can do, but then also just as important is to identify new interests, things that we hadn't even allowed ourselves to be interested in.

David Lowry: 21:32

Here's an idea. It's called the micro break, a micro break. Every day, have a micro break. And I'm going to tell you a little micro break that I've started doing lately and I know it's crazy, but I've discovered the joy of listening to books, and sometimes what I do is I take about five minutes out of my schedule, which is very packed these days, and listen to a book. We all need these little breaks in our life.

Don Drew: 22:00

You're making a great point. Fun and recreation are not one size fits all. What brings joy to one person might not be enjoyable for another. The key is to prioritize activities you genuinely enjoy and effectively help you unwind and recharge. By incorporating enjoying leisure pursuits into our lives, we can cultivate a sense of balance, reduce stress, and foster a more fulfilling and joyful existence.

David Lowry: 22:20

Don, our next area is something I feel so strongly about, but I can remember when I was a young person, I didn't even give it the, hardly any thought at all. And that is cultivating a space or environment that makes you feel peaceful yet productive. That's so important. Some people are really good at this. You walk into their homes and it just feels like a home. But other places I've visited things are cluttered. Things are junked up. There's no sense that you can breathe in the place. We have to spend some time thinking, what feels like home to me? What makes me feel calm and peaceful?

Don Drew: 23:00

Anytime our listeners have gone into a museum, there's been some museum curator that curates what goes into that museum, how it's presented and so forth.

David Lowry: 23:08

That's a great idea.

Don Drew: 23:09

Curate what goes into your home. Christie and I do that. We select art carefully. We don't. We buy things that have meaning to us and we pay close attention to the environment we're creating. In fact, a little secret here, we actually have a room in our house that we call the Peace Room.

David Lowry: 23:27

Mmm, I've seen that room and it is wonderful. Have a friend that I want to invite to be on our program who teaches people how to curate their homes and basically it's what you find interesting and inspiring and lovely, fill your home with those things. What might work for Don might not work for me and vice versa, but learn how to create meaning in the things in your office, your bedroom, your living room and den or wherever you hang out. It'll make a big difference in your life. When you come home, it ought to feel like, I'm home! Not cluttered or indifferent.

Don Drew: 24:05

David, we've arrived at The last wheel! That's spirituality. Let's talk about spirituality and how it reflects our connection to something bigger than ourselves. This section reflects on our connection to something bigger than ourselves and encompasses our search for meaning and purpose in life, which could include our values, our sense of inner peace and so on. Let's take a look at some of the key factors involved in that.

David Lowry: 24:29

Yes, and I'm sorry that we've waited till the very end to do this. We could argue that we should have started with this, but to me, this sense of meaning and your values, your

inner peace that you feel, your connection to something bigger than yourself, is so important in your life. It's never going to cry out as urgently as some of the other things in your life, like paying your bills, money, or taking care of your health when you have a health crisis. It's always something you can delay a bit, but when you do, you'll know, because you won't have peace or calm, or sense of direction. Our spiritual connection is our compass. This is the thing that makes life worth living. And so our key factors of course are find those things that give you meaning, whatever they are. For some people it's nature, or maybe working with pets or animals. For some, it might be the enjoyment of music, or something tied to your religion or faith. Whatever it is, it's important. Don, what are some of the practices you recommend for listeners who want to develop their spirituality?

Don Drew: 25:36

Many of our listeners probably have what they would call a religion or a church they go to or something to that effect. Yet, our spiritual lives can become pretty much like the work life balance issue in which we focus on the work of being a part of a religion and we don't necessarily spend a lot of time focused on our internal self, on self reflection of what it is we believe in, what it actually means to us. Sometimes that means exploring different traditions, ideas, developing spiritual practices, and finding practices that nurture our sense of meaning and connection. For many people, it's prayer, but others it's meditation or spending time in nature, mindfulness exercises, or acts of service to others. So in essence, really what we're talking about is understanding the values that are brought into our lives by our spiritual life and how we enact those in the world.

David Lowry: 26:29

There's so many ways that you can explore this. For me, Don, I'm a contemplative type of person. I like to think deeply about a thing and write about it. Each morning think about a different thing and go as deep with that thought or process as I can. And I find that adds a depth of richness to my life that I didn't have before I started doing this. The most important thing though is to take time and do it daily. It's a high leverage activity. Five minutes can seem like a short amount of time, but add that up over the months and years and you'll realize that it has a terrific impact in your life overall. So, Don, we've talked about eight different things today and we could make a whole show out of each one of those eight, I suppose.

Don Drew: 27:17

Yes, we can. So, as we wrap up our conversation about the Wheel of Life, let's remember that this is really just the first step. Taking some time this week to reflect on your own Wheel of Life. What areas feel balanced and strong or what areas might need some adjustments? There are no right or wrong answers here. The key is to gain awareness and identify opportunities for growth. Peaceful Life Radio is dedicated to providing you with the tools and resources you need to cultivate peace in your life. Thanks for joining us today. We wish you all a peaceful and balanced life.