

FaB Webinar Transcript 12 April 2010

Being in Balance and Managing your Time

Amanda: Ok, we're recording now and we are on the 12th of April, on Monday night, at 8:15 and tonight we're going to be talking about balance and also looking at some little time management techniques. I'm not going to go too deep into time management, I'm going to share with you some of the things that really work, which are quite simple, as you've got the time management call. I think I sent you the transcript as well, so you've got quite a bit of information on that, so we'll just touch on it so that if you don't want to listen to the separate call and read the whole transcript, then you've got some things that you can try immediately this week as well.

So, first of all, I would like to ask you: when do you feel that you are out of balance? How do you know you're out of balance? I'm just going to scribble it down. You can either use the chat facility or shout out, whichever you like, and I'm going to scribble down on this slide. How do you know if you're not in balance?

Maja: I feel all jangly.

Amanda: Is that you, Jo?

Maja: No, it's Maja.

Amanda: I love that word. Is jangly with an 'e'?

Maja: I don't think it matters.

Amanda: Is it a real word?

Maja: Like, strung out.

Amanda: Strung out, yeah.

Maja: My head feels like it's about to implode.

Amanda: Imploding heads!

Amy: Also for me, it's like in a fog.

Amanda: A fog or a fuzz?

Amy: Fog.

Amanda: Fog.

Kim: I feel like I want a glass of wine at about five past eight in the morning.

Amanda: Early onset alcoholism?

Kim: It goes very well on the bran flakes, I'm told!

Amanda: What else?

Maja: I feel physically tense in my body, like my shoulders are painful, almost.

Amanda: Ok. Anyone else got any nice physical symptoms to add to Maja's?

[Lovely Fabber]: I get itchy. An itchy head.

Amanda: An itchy what?

LF: An itchy head. My scalp gets itchy!

Amanda: Anything else?

LF: I don't have nits!

Amanda: Anyone can get nits, you know, it's perfectly all right! Jo said "frustrated and agitated." Yeah.

LF: I'm more shouty and impatient when I'm out of balance, I've got a much shorter fuse than usual.

Amanda: Shorter fuse.

LF: Yeah, very short.

Amanda: Very short fuse. So also I did frustrated and agitated, from Jo, and "don't care anymore" from Nicola – Nicola, can you sort of expand on that, how does that manifest itself, that "don't care anymore"?

Nicola: Well, either I just collapse in a heap of don't care, and won't get out of bed, because I just can't face anymore – I don't care, I don't want to know, I don't want to deal with anything – or I really get more frustrated, cross...so I'm no longer bothered about trying to show a facade, it's very much more a "this is how I am about it – I'm cross about it."

Amanda: Ok, yeah. "Sod the lot of you," sort of thing.

Nicola: Yeah, it's either I hate the world, or sod the lot of you.

Amanda: Hate the world, or sod the lot of you! Ok – anything else?

Kim: I get very fidgety and I can't concentrate on anything, I physically get fidgety, but my brain just can't settle on anything. It just flips and I can't concentrate, which is pretty frustrating.

LF: Do you wake up in the middle of the night?

Kim: No, not really.

Amanda: Does that happen for anyone?

LF: Me.

Amanda: Yeah, me too. Hot brains. Have we got that, not concentrating? Inability to focus, that's what you were talking about, wasn't it, Kim?

Kim: Yes, it's both. I just can't focus, can't concentrate, my brain just doesn't...

Amanda: Ok, any more physical symptoms apart from the itchy head and the tense shoulders?

LF: Needing chocolate.

Amanda: That's just normal! There are so many physical symptoms, aren't there, when you're just out of balance? Your whole body reacts to your mind and gets tense.

Ok, so how do we know when it's right, when life is in balance?

Amy: I think for me it's taking care of all physical and emotional needs, like feeling like I'm eating right and exercising and sleeping.

Amanda: Ok – eating right, exercising, sleeping. And Jo, you just said, “buzzing and happy.” I love that. Hopefully with life as opposed to buzzing with irritation.

Jo: But it is, I know when I'm on top of things, I get in the car to go to work and I'm smiling, I get in the car to pick the kids up from nursery and I'm smiling. I just feel smiley, I just feel like a little buzz inside, it's a lovely feeling.

Amanda: Yeah, I know what you mean. That's great. Smiley inside, that's lovely. And Nicola said, “take on the world.” “Everything feels effortless” – Maja. Energy; singing; nothing is a problem. Confidence. What else have we got? “Time passes neither too quickly nor too slowly; on top of things.” So time is passing at the rate it should do! Time is in sync? Yeah, and having a sense of humour, Nicola, that's a good one. As opposed to a sense of humour failure which is one of the things when we're out of balance.

Kim: That was me.

Amanda: Oh, Kim, sorry, yes. Ok, so eating right, looking after ourselves, buzzing, smiling, take on the world, effortless...ok, so it's good to be in balance, then!

Kim: Can I just make an observation? Just interesting, that when we're in balance, that eating right and exercising and sleeping properly comes into its own. I don't know about everybody else, but when I'm out of balance, which is quite a lot, I eat chocolate and I eat crisps, I eat all the wrong things. Probably if I ate the right things, I'd feel a lot better. When I'm in balance I eat the right things – it probably should be the other way round.

[Diane joins the call.]

Amanda: So what is the symptom and what is the cause? Hi, Diane.

Kim: I don't know, I think the cause is the stress, because once you sort of flick into that out of balance and stressed bit, you start going to all the munchy things. Am I making sense to anybody else?

Amanda: Yes, I'm sure you are.

Kim: It's like that "I don't care" attitude, "I don't care if I eat three bars of chocolate."

LF: Or a bottle of wine!

Amy: Yeah, I think when you feel good, you just feel like taking care of yourself more.

Amanda: Yeah, and when we feel bad, we go into self-sabotaging behaviour, even though we know it's bad for us.

Ok, thanks for that, Kim, it was really useful. To point out the obvious, I think we probably all agree that "being out of balance = not good", and "being in balance = good".

In which case, why don't we get our lives in balance more often? There are so many reasons for that, aren't there? "It is impossible" being one, yeah! But a lot of the time we do have a choice, and when you look at this list, it's like, "well hang on, this is a no-brainer."

So, on with the show. What I would like to do is take you through an exercise to actually create your picture of balance, for you. By the way, I can hear somebody typing in the background, so if you want to type you're probably best just clicking on mute on the little control panel so we can't all hear it. Do you all have a pen and paper handy? If you don't, go and get it now!

Ok, so the first thing is we're going to have some BMW time. Have I talked to any of you about BMW time? It means Bitch, Moan and Whine. So the first step in this is to have a BMW session. So I would like to hear all of your bitch, moans and whines about what stops you, that "Oh, it's impossible!" as somebody said to being in balance. What are all the things that stop you from being in balance in your life right now?

LF: Children.

Amanda: What about children?

Kim: The constant, constant, constant need for attention and they seem to be on radar, the second they think you're going to sit down for three and a half seconds to do something, they're kind of there. You know?

LF: Can husbands be a third child?

Amanda: Absolutely!

Kim: And even when they're not tugging at your sleeves, as it were, or like Charlie today was rifling through my desk when I was trying to do something, and I gave up in the end. Like, rifling through

my very interesting top desk drawer, and then if they're not in the room, they're off stage right and screaming every three and a half seconds. They're just with you all the time!

Amanda: Ok. So Amy, what's stopping you being in balance?

Amy: For me, I guess it seems like the responsibilities that I seem to have to take on. Like the lady in your picture, I carry the load, and so if I'm carrying the load, how can I be balanced, how can I feel good?

Amanda: Ok, when you say carrying the load, what's the load that you're carrying? I mean, I know it would take all night for us to describe the loads, but give us an idea.

Amy: Well, ok, you know, taking care of the kids, not having much childcare at the moment, laundry, cooking, shopping for the food...organising everything, keeping track of what needs to be done, dealing with this other flat we have...do you want me to go on?

Amanda: Yeah, go on!

Amy: Trying to find clothes for the kids to wear when they grow out of the ones...let's see...oh, trying to sell things so that I can get rid of them. Putting away toys, trying to live in a really small house, not having a car, going to the grocery store and putting everything in the stroller...

Amanda: Do you know what, I think at the end of this call I think what I should do is package it up and send it to one of those organisations that try to educate young girls about not getting pregnant! The perfect contraception – listening to a FaB BMW session. Thanks Amy, I know you could go on, but you've given us a good idea. Just bear with me, it says I'm experiencing poor audio quality, let me just check that I've got everything closed down. Ok. Thank you, Amy. Diane, your turn?

Diane: The thing that really annoys me, and I want to whinge about, is the fact that everyone criticises me all the time, doesn't actually recognise all the good things I do, and it pisses me off.

Amanda: So do you think that actually not being recognised stops you from being in balance yourself?

Diane: Well, it's not only not being recognised, it's being constantly put down because I try to run away from my children because I want three minutes of me time, or I'm just working all the time, or the house is an absolute tip when it's not even untidy – it's just everyone else whinging.

Amanda: When you say everyone else, who do you mean?

Diane: My husband, my parents, my in-laws, my work – no one's telling me I'm doing good stuff, everyone's just criticising all the time. Well, maybe that's my perception, but that's certainly how it feels.

Amanda: Ok, so being worn down by the constant criticism.

Diane: And not being strong enough to tell someone to sod off.

Amanda: I'm tempted to say – you, not strong enough?

Diane: I'm a magnet for bullies!

Amanda: Maybe we should practice it by rote: repeat after me – sod off!

LF: Sod off!

Amanda: There you go!

Diane: [inaudible] because I've just come back from seeing an employment lawyer.

Amanda: Ok. Jo, what makes you out of balance? What's your bitch, moan and whine?

Jo: It's really me, and the way my distressing mind works, because it's me telling myself I've got to get this done, I've got to get that done – it's the pressure I put on myself. So [inaudible] the time to go running three times a week, if I have to work late, which I'm having to do at the moment because it's [inaudible] to pick up the kids, and he'll do everything by the time I get in, but I always think more needs to be done. So what makes me out of balance is when I don't feel on top of it, but it's the pressure I put myself under.

Amanda: Ok. Yes. Good, thank you, thanks Jo. And Maja? What makes you out of balance right now? Not right now, obviously everything's fine...

Maja: I think it's in common with most of the other girls on here, it's that feeling that there's just – I just don't always have all the resources that somehow I need, and my husband doesn't, to get through the day. Like the buck of everything seems to stop with me: the buck of him and his work, and the kids and how they are at nursery, and their health, and my work, and the household, and managing all the broader family relationships; remembering birthdays and getting the ironing done and sorting the cat's vet appointments out – it's like every single thing, every single thing is down to me, apart from that he goes to work and earns most of the money that comes into the household and then comes home again. He's a great dad, and I'm not knocking him for a second, but it's very difficult to feel in balance when actually it feels like there's a fundamental imbalance in this whole household thing.

Amanda: Yeah. I think you've hit a nerve there. Yeah, I think you've definitely hit a nerve!

Maja: Feminism hasn't done what we thought it would do, has it?

Amanda: No, feminism hasn't. It's given us a rope to hoist ourselves up with. Yes, you can have it all, as long as you do what you did before as well. You really can have it all – all the housework, all the planning, and your business or your job.

LF: But do you know what, men couldn't do it. Not because they're any [inaudible], they have completely different brain chemistry. There is actually physically no way they could juggle all this stuff, and I'm not being patronising. It's an absolute medical fact. They couldn't do all this stuff, and things fall apart. You know if you leave your husband with the kids for two hours, if you had them for two hours you'd also do twenty other things. He has them for two hours, they just sit and play or watch crap on the telly and nothing else happens!

LF: That's so true!

Amanda: And feed them crap. And yet we still write a list! "Right, do this, this, this and this." Ok, yeah, and I've just go to read out, for the benefit of Françoise and Amelia, who might not see all this if they don't look at the webinar and see the notes on here. Everybody was making comments as I was talking about this, Nicola said, "He has an infinite resource – a wife!" Kim O'Rourke: "SO TRUE!" in big capitals. Amy says, "Yes, I totally identify with that, Maja, I always wonder about this – how did it happen this way??" Nicola says, "I'd like a wife, Kim wants a wife too." And Jo said, "Women can multitask, women remember everything which needs to be done. I remember that I apportion the chores, not 50/50, but hubby has to help." Nicola said, "Muffin mum" - which I'm not quite sure what that means!

Nicola: It's on the website, I put it on the FaB forum? [inaudible] eat the muffin?

Amanda: Oh, of course, yes, yes, I remember! I was on Ghostbusters, I was imagining Mr, what's his name? A female version of that! Absolutely, yeah, Muffin Mum. Sit down to eat your muffin and it's been nicked. And Diane says, "Are we all the same person?" So true. Ok, thanks Maja, that was really – it wasn't enlightening, because we knew it all already.

Maja: Well, it was cathartic.

Amanda: And Nicola – Muffin Mum!

Nicola: What's my BMW? Oh, God...I think I mentioned it to you probably in February. I was off to London for the weekend and I couldn't just leave the house. I couldn't just prepare to go for me, but my husband, I had to prepare for three people so I could go: I had to also prepare what those two other people were going to be doing for the three days that I wasn't going to be in the house before I met them again, and that kind of gets on my nerves, that I'm the one who has to cover all the bases or whatever.

LF: It's like looking ahead all the time, isn't it, it's not thinking ahead for you, it's thinking ahead for everyone else. That time away is more effort than it's worth, sometimes.

Amanda: It's never more effort than it's worth, to go away.

LF: Well no, it's good when you're away, but all that you have to do just to get away is appalling. You don't just pack your bag and book your ticket and go, you have to make sure everything's in place and that it all runs on autopilot whilst you're away.

Amanda: Absolutely, and I think I remember talking to Nicola about this when you went away, to London, wasn't it, in February. I think I probably shared this with you, Nicola, I can't remember – but my own empathy with that was that my birthday treat for my 40th which I planned – I hope he isn't in the next room – was at the Chester Grosvenor, which is this wonderful hotel in Chester, which we've lived near for years and it never occurred me to actually go there. Michelin-starred restaurant, just the best service. I thought, actually, "that would be lovely to go there for the night." So I explained to Chris exactly what I wanted, I said it had to be in the Simon Radley Michelin-starred restaurant; I said I wanted to go up at lunchtime on the Friday, and I didn't want to have – this was part of the birthday present – I didn't want to have to make sure that whoever

was looking after the boys, (which was sister-in-law, in the end) I didn't want to have to make sure that all their clothes were planned for whilst we were away; I didn't want to have to plan the babysitter's food or the boys' food or put all the boys' stuff out or all of that stuff, and I didn't want to have to do all the finer detail organising about it. Oh, and I also wanted to have afternoon tea there, whilst I was there. The idea was that he would meet me in the bar, very romantic, I would be sitting there looking luscious, not getting ready in a rush together, but me having got ready by myself, in peace, in the hotel room. He did all the stuff with the kids and met me there. And of course I ended up organising the food for the babysitter and the boys and getting all their clothes ready...and got to the hotel and he'd forgotten to book me in for afternoon tea. However, it was still lovely, but you know? There go you – and I guess we all have a story like that.

Let me just read this...Diane: “just been to the Lakes and planned everything for good and bad weather for me and the kids, husband just moaned about how much stuff I brought with, even though we were in the car. Can't bloody win! Really enjoying this venting session; will find inner peace now afterwards.” Yes, we will find inner peace, girls.

Nicola says, “my biggest BMW is that I have been compromised a great deal and not that W's horrible but it's just being part of being part of being a mum; [???] while he's travelling for work.” Yeah. Scones tonight. Ok – that's enough moaning, onwards and upwards.

So now that you've got your complaint, think about one or more of the complaints that you have just uttered in our BMW session, and think about, what is the request behind the complaint? In assertiveness techniques they talk about making a positive request, and I often talk to people about being charge-neutral, IE, not loading it with, “And if you really loved me...” but just really simple, positive statement requests. So a complaint of, “I don't have enough time to exercise,” might be, “I want to exercise three times a week.” “I don't get enough sleep,” might be, “I want eight hours of sleep each night.” Now, the example that Diane gave us, with the trip to the Lakes – there might be a few requests in there. I would suggest you pick one of the complaints – and I'm sure there were many within the whole trip to the Lakes! - and be very specific and extract a request from the complaints: “I don't get time alone,” might be a request of, “I want twenty minutes' thinking time to myself each day,” or in Diane's case, “I want three minutes' thinking time to myself each day!” So let me just run around the room again. Amy, what's one complaint and one request behind the complaint?

Amy: I'm still thinking...I think that “I want eight hours of sleep each night” would be high up there, that would really help me.

Amanda: Ok, great. I want eight hours' sleep each night. Diane?

Diane: I'm struggling between two of those that you've got there. A lot of what you've reflected to me I think I should say. “I want to learn to say no more than yes,” stand up for myself a bit more, and therefore not feel guilty if I ask for three minutes of me time just to be.

Amanda: Ok. Nicola says, “I think you can so do it, Diane.” Ok – I want to learn to say no more than yes. Jo?

Jo: I think mine would be sort of having time to just be, because the time I do get, I will be exercising or I will be doing something, and sometimes I'd like just to sit. I don't have time just to be.

Amanda: Ok. So you want to have time to just be?

Jo: Yes.

Amanda: Ok, thank you. Kim?

Kim: I think there's two, but the main one is I want to share the load more. I do everything.

Amanda: I wonder if you could be – I know I've given a very general example there, I want to share the load at home more – but in order to really hone this down to one aspect of sharing the load, what might help the most?

Kim: If I wrote a list of all the activities that are involved in running this house, and I'm sure everybody else is hearing this, it's an incredibly long list. If I put somebody's name against it, like, I'd have 99.9% of all the jobs on there. And I just don't think that's fair.

Amanda: Ok, so how could you make it into 90%, which would be a significant improvement?

Kim: I think...delegate. And also I think, Sam, as well, who in two weeks' time is seven - he's full of attitude, and I asked him to sweep under the table the other day. He was like, "No, I don't want to!" I said, "Well, do you think I want to do stuff all the time?" Really adult! He's going to have to start really pulling his weight a bit more as well.

Jo: I just wanted to say something. When we first realised what it was like to have a child at the time, and the household chores, I used to say to Laurence, "Can you just do this for me?" and we just got to the point that we would just fall out, and what the realisation was, it was the fact that I would say off the cuff, "Can you do this?" and he wasn't expecting it. So he said to me, "Tell me what you want me to do on which nights, and I will do it." Because that way, he spends his day knowing that when he gets home from work he has X,Y and Z to do, and it didn't bother him at all. What he hated was me dropping it on him and saying, "Can you help me with this now?" and that really made a huge difference. It just relieved some of my chores and he came to appreciate exactly what it is I was doing.

Amanda: That's great. It's being very specific; it's the Mars vs. Venus thing here. I don't want to get into solutions right now, we can do some coaching on this in the next call, but – sorry, Jo, I think that's really great, but Kim, what I'd like you to do is be specific about one request, because obviously there's lots if you're doing 99.9%, and you've also mentioned something about your son and him being a bit of a strop and an attitude thing. So pick one, and make a request. Which one will you pick?

Kim: I think as far as Sam is concerned, it's pushing to have him do a job like sweeping the floor every evening. If I could just start with that, I think.

Amanda: Ok.

Kim: And I think for myself as well, if I set myself the task of writing the list of everything that I do, and then I can look at it practically and then I can sit there and talk to Nick about it.

Amanda: As you mentioned before, the list of everything you do, would be pages and pages. That might be an interesting exercise to do and stick in front of errant other halves.

Kim: It's quite frightening. I could probably cope with the thinking stuff if I didn't have to do all the practical stuff as well.

Amanda: Ok. Is there an action there for you, some homework, for you to actually write that list as a start?

Kim: Yeah, I think so.

Amanda: Incidentally, with kids, and getting them to do things and age-specific responsibilities and everything, there's a guy, a parenting expert called...well, his website is parentingideas.com.au. I'll put it on here. Michael Grose! I've been following him for years. He talks so much sense, and he does a weekly newsletter, and there is some really useful stuff on how to talk to kids. He is big on kids, you know, sharing the load and the family being a team, etc, etc. I think you'd find some of the techniques that he teaches very useful. Yeah, Nicola, he does have a book on how to bring up boys. The only criticism I have of Michael Grose is whenever I have tried to buy his products, I've never been able to get any of his team behind his business to respond to me, it's absolutely ridiculous. I've tried several times. I would have bought several of his books. I've got one, that I managed to get here in the UK called, oh, it's his original one. But he does some great programs – whether you can actually manage to get his team to sell you anything here in the UK is another matter. Anyway – Maja, what's one of your complaints and one of your requests?

Maja: I've just been thinking about this and realising that actually, what I need to do is get myself under control, not anybody else, and what I need to do is, I need to learn how to make requests of myself and other people in a more effective way. It's not that there's nobody there to help me, it's just that I don't always ask in the right way. Also, I don't know how to stop, and I need to learn how to just stop. Like last night, I've got a bit of a rubbish cold, and I haven't been feeling particularly brilliant, and last night after the kids went to bed I was still wandering round with a nose full of snot and razor blade throat, picking toys up off the floor, for no reason, because they're at nursery all day on a Monday and I'm at the office, so I don't even have to look at it. I was just like, stop, stop! Sit down, you stupid woman! This is what my request is, of myself, is to learn when to stop and to know when to make requests.

Amanda: Ok. So the request behind the complaint is learning when to stop yourself?

Maja: Yeah, I want to know when to stop myself.

Amanda: Ok. Thank you.

Maja: Like take the key out, you know.

Amanda: Or just take your foot off the accelerator for a second.

Maja: Yeah. I'm going to drive over the edge!

Amanda: Thank you. Nicola?

Nicola: Yeah, I think probably for me it's really about saying, "I think it's time to review what's delegated in this house," and seek some more support on how we do things in this house.

Amanda: Ok. So you want to delegate more and seek more support on how things are done in the house, is that right?

Nicola: Yeah, I just think we've fallen back into the same old pattern again. Once we've renegotiated, and my cleaner's also [inaudible], so I'm going to have to sort that out again.

Amanda: Say that again? I heard, "I'm going to have to sort that out again," I was busy trying to stop a cough.

Nicola: Sorry, no, my cleaner's decided that she no longer wants to work for me, so that's going to have to be reviewed.

Amanda: So you want a new cleaner as well. Ok, thank you very much. Ok, now what I would like you to do before our coaching call in a fortnight is to really brainstorm all the complaints. Not just the complaints about everyone else, but also complaints about yourself. You know, everything that's wrong with your balance, and then for each of them, look at the hidden request behind each of the complaints. Then the next step is I'd like you to come to our coaching call with your top three requests for changing, for improving your balance. I'm just going to pause a minute, because somebody has just joined the call, but for some reason they're called 'Test.' Who is it, Test?

Amelia: It's Amelia, I don't know if you can hear me.

Amanda: Hi, Amelia! Yes, we can hear you. Welcome.

Amelia: Do you know, I've been looking for about twenty minutes to find the link to the call.

Amanda: Oh no!

Amelia: I think because I've been on holiday I must still be in holiday mode.

Amanda: Oh, well that's good! That's good. So we've been talking about what makes us in balance and what makes us out of balance, and what we did – can you see the screen, Amelia, ok?

Amelia: Yes, I can, yeah, it's good.

Amanda: We looked at what makes us out of balance, and we brainstormed all the things – jangly, strung out, imploding heads and fidgety. The early-onset alcoholism was Kim, who decided she wanted a gin instead of milk in her cereal in the morning, and then that kind of feeling of "don't care, sod the lot of them," not doing anything about it. We looked at when we're in balance, and all of the outwards signs of how we know we're in balance: we've got a better sense of humour, we feel we can take on the world, Jo said she was buzzing and smiley, and we look after ourselves. Then we've been going through an exercise; we started with a BMW: a Bitch, Moan and Whine session, which you will enjoy, I think, if you listen to the recording! There was a lot of similarities in what came up, and the main thing that Maja talked about was this kind of how we do all of it, and the other half tends to just do his job, and we do our job, AND all the rest of it. There were lots of

“hear, hear”s to that.

I asked everybody to tell me one of their complaints, one of the things that stops them from being in balance, and then to identify a request; so a positive, assertive what they would like – what's the actual request that's hidden behind the complaint? Just when you joined, just now, on this slide, we talked about things for you to do before our coaching call so we can pick up on some of them, which is to brainstorm all your complaints on what makes you out of balance, what's wrong, looking at the requests behind that and then to prioritise your top three. So just to look at the three things that are causing you to be out of balance the most.

So, before I move on, can I have one complaint from you – what's one thing you'd like to change to make you more in balance, or what's preventing you from being in balance?

Amelia: I guess I'd just like to have some time, sometimes, to sit down. Just be still, I kind of never stop.

Amanda: Ok, yeah. I think you'll get a lot of people saying, “Yep!” to that one. So I think you've kind of half-expressed the request there: “I would like some time to sit down.” Can you be more specific? If we were kind of honing this down, what's one request from one bit of time?

Amelia: So – I just have a whole stack of things that just keep piling up that I want to do but I never get a chance to do. An example: yesterday I was out in the morning and then got back and took both children to a party in the afternoon, was out of the house for three hours, and came back, and my husband had just been doing whatever he wanted to do for three hours – but I never get that time, I never get a chance for that.

Amanda: Ok. So what's a specific request? I mean, would it be, “I would like an hour a day to myself”? Two hours a day, half an hour a day? A day a week?

Amelia: An hour a week would be better than I have, just an hour to sit and do whatever it is I want to do. Nothing to do with work, nothing to do with the house or the family...just an hour for me.

Amanda: Ok, ok. Great. So you'd like an hour a week for yourself?

Amelia: Yep.

Amanda: We're not going into solutions today, but just to start actually identifying them. Yeah, Maja, you've just raised a really good point on the chat, “I do honestly think I'm the problem, not necessarily husband – I take on everything like things done a certain way and don't ask for help. But he can be brilliant, this weekend he looked after kids while I went to gym, cooked Sunday roast and ironed all his shirts. I can't really complain at the moment but at some point I'll need to nudge again, I'm sure.”

And again, it goes back to balance, and back to the old see-saw: you know, balance is never static. I'd like to have had this picture with her in the middle – where's she gone? Rather than him. You can tell it was a man who came up with this one.

Jo: He's about to step off, he's probably going out running for an hour and a half because he's got the marathon coming up.

Amanda: Actually, I think he's about to jump up and go off with another woman! Yes, you're probably right. Yes, he's got some serious training to do for one of his hobbies.

Yeah, but the whole thing of this person being at the centre of this seesaw is that balance is something where you have to keep shifting your weight, you have to keep looking at what it is you're doing. As Maja said, ok, let's look at this, we do tend to get in our own way, and what Jo was saying about speaking to her husband and being very specific in giving him the “this is what I expect from you.” Jo also talked about removing the emotion and coming back to that charge-neutral thing. Rather than “you always” and “you never” - getting into that positive request.

Does anyone know what time it is? I've got no watch on at the moment. Five past nine. Ok. Typical...ok, so there is a set of questions for you to go off and ponder on.

Jo: Amanda?

Jo: I'm really sorry, but my friend's just phoned, she's in heavy labour, I need to go!

Amanda: Oh gosh, go! Oh wow, good luck!

Jo: I'm really sorry!

Amanda: It's alright!

Jo: Ok, see you later, bye!

Amanda: Catch up with you soon, bye! Now was Jo going to be a birthing partner, did she say, or is she looking after children?

LF: No, she's looking after her daughter.

Amanda: Oh, right. Yes, definitely shoot off very quickly. Ok, so these slides will be up on the members page, so what I'd like you to do is just to sit down when you have some time to yourself, girls, which I know you've all got lots of, and answer: what is your ideal balance? What might be different in your ideal balance five or ten years from now? That's a really useful question to ask yourself, and to answer, because above everything else it helps you to realise that nothing is static. Everything is moving and things will change for you. So what is ideal now might not be ideal in five or ten years. Think about how many hours a week you actually want to work, how many weeks of holiday you want to take each year. Not how many you think you can take, but how many you'd like to take – and if it's 52, it's 52! How much time do you want to spend with your children and with your partner each week, and how much time do you want to spend alone – that one's for Amelia – each week, that's not actually working time? And then the question that you've all answered in your questionnaire, but just to revisit that one, what is it that you love to do? So just thinking about what you'd do with that time, that makes your heart sing, that fills you with that zizziness and zest for life. How much money do you need to be in balance? Actually put a figure on it for you. What will you do with that money? And then the last question is, what is your ideal work environment? I can see a wry smile on Diane's face, I'm sure she'll have a very full and descriptive picture of her ideal work environment. Just flip what you have at the moment, Diane!

Diane: No job, Amanda!

Amanda: No job? Ok! So, write your balance vision. Once you've answered those questions and looked back on your answers, try to write your utopian picture of balance, in a couple of sentences or one paragraph. Once you've written that, I've talked to you about baby steps, about not necessarily making a leap – but think about one step that you can do on your number one priority to move towards that. It doesn't mean you're going to achieve it tomorrow, next week, or maybe not even a year, but just commit to one step and be ready to tell us what that one step is in our next call. So you don't need to write all this down, you'll be able to access all of this. What I'll do as well is I'll copy and paste this into an email, just to make it easy for you, because I know sometimes you have to download things, it's a schlep.

Ok...oh, I hate that, when your voice comes back on you. I'm just reading what – sorry, laughing about the “giving up on marathon” plans. How did he get injured? Did you injure him, Diane?

Diane: He ran too much! He got squished on the road down the Archway road when he was riding his bike, so that definitely put paid to him.

Amanda: Oh, gosh, that's not good.

Diane: He's alright now.

Amanda: And then, Kim, you said you end up feeling guilty if you want to go out for a walk in the evening, “straight after I've put Charlie to bed, leaving P in charge in case she cries or has done a poo.” Lose the guilt, Kim! Go for the walk...just do it!

Kim: Yeah, I know! I don't know why.

Amanda: Feel the guilt and do it anyway. Amy said her [inaudible] is from another planet – Planet Italy – where a mother, Mamma Mia, has done it all. Take him to the park...actually, Amy, I'd love to know how he got on. Don't tell me now, but do tell us either in the forum or on email how your husband got on with having the kids when you were at the retreat day.

Okey dokey, right. As I said I'm just going to touch on time management, and just share a few highlights of some of the tips that have helped me and helped clients over the years. Time management, I think, the key to time management is three things: having clarity, and that goes back to your balance vision – what is it that you want to achieve from your time? What is important, how do you want to spend your time? In the time management call that you've all got access to, I mentioned the concept of having a life bank account, and I'll just read through this, because I think it's a great concept.

So, imagine you have a time bank account that you're withdrawing 24 hours from daily. Once you've spent that day, you can't get it back. Draw yourself a chart of an average 24 hours and ask yourself what and who are you spending your time on, why, and is this what you want to be spending your time on and with? If not, what and who would you like to spend your time with instead? What do you need to do differently to make this happen? So by writing your balance vision and by starting to request your requests behind the complaints you're starting to get that clarity that it's important for having for time management.

Just to recite you a – a guy called David Schkade, PhD, is a psychologist and professor of management at the University of California, San Diego. He made a study of 900 working women, and he asked the women to keep a note of everything that they'd done the day before. They were then asked to review their diary, and how they were feeling at each point in the day. (This is one for you in particular to listen to, Mrs. Maja “I Never Stop”, and I'm sure others on this call too.) Some people had tears in their eyes, said Schkade, when they realised that they spend the vast majority of their time with people they don't like or on activities that drain them. People don't devote enough time to seriously thinking about how they spend their life and about how much of it they actually enjoy.

So the good news is that Schkade says that even if you transfer just an hour of your day from an activity you hate such as cleaning the kitchen floor or doing your filing, to one you enjoy, such as reading a good book or taking the dog out, you should see a significant improvement in your overall contentment. The most important piece is taking action – or maybe taking inaction.

The second part of this time management trilogy is simplification. Hopefully you'll all be able to make it to our Action Accelerator day on Saturday morning, because one way to simplify is just getting rid of those tolerations, and that's what I run these days for is to help you to get rid of those tolerations. I've just opened the chat and there's a whole thing about sex going on!

LF: Sorry, Amanda, I'm just laughing, because my husband goes off on this course and it's all about doing things that make you feel great and going with the flow and all the rest of it, and one of the things that we're asked is, do you enjoy having sex? Well, yes, you do – and how often do you have it? Reconsider that in your lifestyle. So he comes home from his course, and he's obviously interested in having a little bit of...and I'm like, “I'm too tired, go away!” It was just the fact that he'd gone off on a course that's sponsored by work and comes home and wants to get me to do something I simply haven't got the time to do anymore!

Amanda: Well, tell him you went on a course and you identified the things that would help your life and make you happy, which was less organising, which would give you more time for sex!

LF: Yeah!

Amanda: There's a deal to be had here. Boadicea got it right, I think it was Boadicea. Was it Boadicea and her daughters that withdrew sex from their...I don't know if they had husbands at that time in Britain.

LF: I think it was in Greek mythology or a Greek story or something...

LF: Was she the one who went leaping round on a horse, half-naked, was that her?

Amanda: Yeah, but she was able to do that because she'd abstained from sex.

LF: Oh, I'm sorry.

Amanda: I don't know, I could be making this up. There is a famous story about a tribe of women who withdrew sex from their husbands, I don't know whether it was to go to war or stop a war or something. It's the reverse of the oldest profession in the world – the reason it's still going strong. Anyway, let's leave sex for the time being. Simplification to sex, to structure, and structure is the

kind of time management techniques that we talk about: how to help us to get things done when there's always so much on your plate.

The highlights of the structure techniques are, first of all, the power of three. One thing that my former coach, who was brilliant at time management, always used to say to me when I had my regular, "Oh, my gosh, I'm in overwhelm!" was whenever I got into overwhelm, she'd say, "Ok, what have you got on in your life right now? You've got to reduce it to three main things in your life. What are the three main things? You can have no more. If you've got four then you need to drop one. If you feel you can't drop one you need to really reassess those priorities." I'm sorry, I'm distracted – who's talking about the Five-Minute Fix, Maja?

Maja: Sorry!

Amanda: Does that mean a quickie?

Maja: No, it's a blowjob. It's a book written by women, by the way, to get blokes off your back and make them feel happier.

Amanda: Or on your back, as the case may be! Anyway, thank you for that. There's a resource for you, girls. Babyproofing your marriage....

Next thing is one I learned from Michael Neal, you've probably all heard of Priority 1, Priority 2, Priority 3: the Michael Neal version of that is first of all, instead of Priority 1 is: "bad things happen if I don't" – IE if you don't do your tax return, bad things happen. Good things happen if I do – so, if you spend some time reading "Babyproof Your Marriage", perhaps, then that'd be nice. So "that'd be nice" being Priority 3. So, you know, we don't have to do it, but that would be nice. And sometimes we kind of tend to go into "that'd be nice" and to procrastinate on the "bad things happen if I don't". so if you look at your list of things to do and prioritise in that way, it's a lot less dry than the "1, 2, 3" and it really helps you to think about why you're doing things.

The one thing that you do – so this I find really useful at work when I've got a whole lot of different things. I have this list, I turn over the page, and just write, "If I only achieve one thing today it will be..." and I write that thing down and it's the simple thing of focussing on the only thing that you've got on that page. On the previous page you might have a big list, but on that page, you've only got one thing at a time. Once you've achieved that thing, you cross it off.

The next is – there's a very strange noise in the background? I hope nobody's putting "How to Babyproof Your Marriage" into practise while I'm talking!

LF: It sounds like aliens!

Amanda: It does sound a bit like an alien, doesn't it? Diane, why are you growing armpit hair?

Diane: Because it's the same as the Five-Minute Fix!

Amanda: Anyway...big rocks! Oh, no, the thing's having a sexual innuendo now...big rocks time management. Many of you will have come across this: it's told in various different ways. You imagine you have a jar, and you have to fit into that jar some large rocks, and some small stones, some gravel and some water. If you put the gravel in first, then the gravel – representing all the

little things – then you won't have room for the big rocks. The idea is that you treat your life, you treat your priorities, and you identify the big rocks – IE, the important things first, and probably you only have room for three, the power of three, big rocks – so you put the big rocks into the jar of life first, and all the other stuff kind of seeps in anyway. It gets done – and it always does get done. It might not get done to the efficiency that we want it, being superwomen, but it does get done. So if you think about the big rocks of time management and look at what's actually really important right now, and what's important might not be necessarily the same thing as what is urgent.

Many of you will have heard of the Stephen Covey quadrant, which I think personally doesn't do it for me, but he has a quadrant of Important/Urgent, Important/Non-Urgent; Non-Urgent/Important and Non-Urgent/Non-Important. I think it's only men who have time to fill in that quadrant, but going back to big rocks, it's: what is important?

I could go on more about this, what's important, in fact I've just written – weeks late – my Inspire, so read that. Hopefully it'll come out tomorrow or Wednesday, and you'll know what I mean. I've talked about dropping a ball, which you'll remember we talked about in our first webinar, and sometimes I think that time management is about dropping that ball and going back to what is important. Sometimes you really do have to say, “Ok, it's back to lack of time management.” We can't do it all – what is really important in the bigger scheme of things?

The next thing is having a Golden Hour, and this is a great one for work, or I guess for housework, or something if you have a project, is to set yourself a timer for one hour and to concentrate on that thing for one hour.

The other one that I wanted to mention to you is having a theme for the month, for the week, for the day – what is your theme? So it's going back to that overall big picture of what you're trying to achieve here, and what's the theme of it? Write it down, and ask yourself, am I working, am I doing, in alignment with what I decided the main theme, the main focus of this week/month, whatever it is? If anybody's interested in theming their month, it's particularly good – well, it's good for planning work. I've got a little worksheet on themes, theming your month, so I can send that to you if you're interested, just let me know.

And then just the last one is being done for the day, and going back to the dropping a ball. There's always going to be one more thing that you could do – Maja! At what point...

Maja: I was nodding, I was sitting there nodding.

Amanda: At what point do you say, “I am done for the day”? Kim said she dropped all her housework balls today and made a peg bag instead! Great, that sounds really therapeutic.

Kim: Well, with the sewing machine.

Amanda: Ok, just to wind up – anybody else got any very quick time management gems that they want to add that really help you?

Amy: Oh, Amanda, one of them that you had before was about putting it in the past tense – like putting your to do list in the past tense?

Amanda: Oh yes, that was a good one, wasn't it? I'd forgotten about that, yeah.

Amy: I kind of got that working for me.

Amanda: Yep, ok.

Amy: It just makes me feel like it's actually going to happen a bit more!

Amanda: Great! Thanks, Amy. Anything else? Kim, concentrate! Get off your [??] material for £1.70!

Maja: I would say that sometimes when you really need to get going on several things at once, rather than setting that "as well as", a different way of setting the time for an hour is to set it for twenty minutes and just give each task twenty minutes, and rotate them, until you get into the zone with one of them and keep going with it.

Amanda: Yeah, that's great.

Maja: Smaller chunks of time, it limits it so that you don't feel that you've got that infinite time.

Amanda: Yeah, great. Thanks, Maja. Twenty-minute rotating tasks. Go on, Diane?

Diane: I basically have always been a control freak with my inbox, I've always only had to have one page in front of me. And when my workload totally spiralled out of control last October and has continued, I now have on my screen 459 unread emails – but, because I've just looked at the header pane for all of them, I know that a lot of them are duplicates from people replying, so I stopped panicking about all of it and I can just live with them and leave them there. It's almost like letting a ball drop, and it's just that letting go bit and recognising you don't have to deal with everything.

Amanda: Ok, great. Thanks, Diane, that's really useful.

Kim: My mum taught me one which I've always kind of adhered to, which is just to, whatever you're working on, just focus on that. I think as women we're terribly good at multitasking and so we do, but it doesn't help. If you introduce a focus on, "Right now I'm loading the dishwasher," or "Right now I'm cooking tea," or "Right now I'm writing a report." Whatever it is, it takes a lot of the stress away and actually makes it easier to manage the time because you're not all over the place.

Amanda: Yeah, and that's also like a living meditation, and Tamara, if she was here would be able to talk more about that: "I am loading the dishwasher, I am loading the dishwasher..." Just being in the moment and going back to that being in the present.

Kim: Yeah, you actually complete a task then.

Amanda: Great. Thanks, Kim. One more, anybody else?

Amelia: Last time we spoke Amanda, I was talking about how much I had to do and you told me to write it all down, and I kind of thought writing it all down would be really stressful because I'd see it all written down. But actually I was pleasantly surprised, it kind of didn't seem as bad somehow,

once you've written it down. I still haven't got through it, but actually just that task of writing it down helped with the whole thing.

Amanda: Yeah, ok, great. Thanks, Amelia: Write it all down, yeah. Dave Allen, who's one of the most famous time management gurus says that. That's his big thing I got from his books; write it all down. You must have a receptacle, get it out of your head. Ok, great. I'm going to wind up now because my time management has been appalling as usual. So just the last thing I wanted to leave you with, which is kind of a little extra, but it's a nice exercise to do, should you feel the urge – which I actually suspect is not a priority for most of you at the moment.

LF: Can you put it on fullscreen, Amanda?

Amanda: Yeah, sorry. It's quite small, isn't it? There you go, is that better? Ok, so this is a little timetable, and this is taken from CoachU, my coach training school. It's a very small module, a sub-module of a course called Personal Foundation where as coaches we work on ourselves. This was about time, and I always thought this was a great exercise to actually look at the different members of your family and to assess: what is the quality of the time spent with each person? What is it you'd like for that person? Because part of wanting more time is to have more time with the people that we love and enjoy spending time with. So it just takes you step by step; what is it you want for these people? What's it like now? And again, there's three small steps, one to three small steps you could do to improve the quality of the time you spend with that person. Actually, it would be interesting to put "Me" as one of the family members here. So yeah, that might be a good addition to that exercise – especially for Amelia!

Thank you very much everybody. Let me just whiz round the room to wrap up: one thing that you're going to take away from today. Let me start with Amy, go from the top to the bottom.

Amy: I think just taking the time to think about all the complaints and moaning that I might have and looking at that on paper, and then deciding a couple of things to do about it.

Amanda: Ok, great. Thanks, Amy. Diane?

Diane: Get off the hamster wheel, and let some balls drop, and just learn to walk away.

Amanda: Ok, great. Keep practicing! Kim?

Kim: I am trying desperately hard to drop the guilt about asking for some help.

Amanda: Yeah, or even, as I said – I said it jokingly, but I meant it – feel the guilt and do it anyway, and then see if the guilt starts reducing. We desensitise ourselves to something by doing it again and again, so just try it with guilt the same way as you would any new thing. It's asking something new, and I wonder if guilt is a default position? There's really no need for you to feel guilty for going off to take a walk when you do what you do, Kim. Everybody here would agree with that – we're all with you. Thanks, Kim. Maja?

Maja: I like to think my life is broadly getting in balance, actually, but I think it's getting the little bits right, and big rocks, and being done for the day have really resonated with me.

Amanda: Great, thank you. Thanks, Maja. Nicola, before I go to you, I just wanted to read out what

you said, I think it's great: "Jeff Bridges said his mum always gave him and his siblings an hour of concentrated time per day, and he remembers that clearly. When I read that it spoke volumes about what impacts on your child and what is important." And by the way, before you all start beating yourselves up about not giving your children one hour of concentrated time a day, try five minutes!

Nicola: This is a Hollywood mum, you know?

Amanda: Yes, she had someone to do all the other stuff. I think there is definitely value to that concentrated time, but I think even just five minutes of concentrated time, and the thing is to give it to yourself as well. I know it's cutting the cake into more and more slices, but then it's about priorities, I guess. Sorry, Nicola?

Nicola: I think I have a lot of things in balance...some of those questions that you've posed us tonight I'm going to sit and have a really good think about them, because there's obviously something that's making me whine, and I really would like to understand what that is. Probably it's about this compromise.

Amanda: Yeah. Yeah, ok. Thank you. Amelia?

Amelia: I like the stuff around the 24 hour a day bank account. I'm kind of using that concept to think about how I can get this hour to myself.

Amanda: Ok. I'll put that up on the members page, and the other thing was the themes, wasn't it? So I'll put it up on the page as well so you've all got access to it. What else was I going to do? Put the questions onto an email so you've got easy access to them. Was there anything else that I said I'd do? Anything else that you want?

Ok, thank you very much. If you can make it on Saturday, then we start at 9 o'clock and we finish at 1. If you can only make it for one of the hours, we'll be meeting on the hour every hour just for a few minutes. As I said in the email, it's just short and focussed: right what are you going to do? Get on with it! These kind of intensive days are based on accountability.

So, good to see you there, but don't worry if you've got other stuff planned, and enjoy the rest of your week and I'll speak to you either on Saturday or two weeks' today – same time same place! Night, all.