

Differentiation

(Quoted & adapted From David Schnarch, Intimacy and Desire, pages 72, 73)

The Four Points of Balance (Briefly explained)

1. Solid Flexible Self™—the ability to be clear about who you are and what you're about, especially when others pressure you to adapt and conform.
2. Quiet Mind–Calm Heart™—being able to calm yourself down, soothe your own hurts, and regulate your own anxieties.
3. Grounded Responding™—the ability to stay calm and not overreact, rather than creating distance or running away when someone gets anxious or upset.
4. Meaningful Endurance™—being able to step up and face the issues that bedevil you and your relationships, and the ability to tolerate discomfort for the sake of growth.

More Fully Described

The First Point of Balance, when you have a solid flexible self as opposed to a reflected sense of self, it lets you maintain your own psychological “shape” in close proximity to people important to you who pressure you to accommodate them. You don’t have to keep distance (physically or emotionally) to stay clear about who you are. The more solid your sense of self, the more important you can let others be to you, and the more you can let yourself be truly known. You can seek advice and let yourself be influenced by others. You can change your mind when warranted. You can be flexible without losing your identity.

The Second Point of Balance—having a quiet mind and calm heart—allows you to regulate your own emotions, feelings, and anxieties. If you can’t soothe and comfort yourself, then your desires and life’s frustrations will pull you apart. Self-soothing (or comforting) is your ability to calm yourself down, soothe your own hurt feelings, and keep your fears and anxieties under control. A Quiet Mind–Calm Heart plays a critical role in mature adult love.

The Third Point of Balance involves making grounded responses to the people and events around you. It means not overreacting in response to another person’s anxiety. Grounded Responding plays a big role in mind-mapping (the ability to sense what is going on inside another person): You have to buffer what you learn when you map the minds of the people you love. If you’re like most people, your ability to mind-map far exceeds your ability to remain calm and grounded. Mapping another person’s mind can make you upset and highly reactive.

The Fourth Point of Balance lets you endure discomfort for growth. All people to some extent seek pleasure and avoid pain. But what makes human beings adaptive and successful is our capacity to forego immediate gratification and endure hardship. This allows us to pursue long-term goals and values we hold dear. Being able to endure the pain and heartache of relationships makes marriage, families, parenting, and caring for others possible. That’s not easy. But it’s easier to tolerate when your pain and heartache is meaningful, when it serves some purpose you value or something good might come out of it. Purposeless, wasteful, stubborn, or foolish pain and suffering is much harder to tolerate and accomplishes virtually nothing. All Four Points of Balance are involved in maintaining, caring for, and developing your self. These four abilities are the pillars undergirding your sense of self. These four capacities will help you keep your emotional balance when things get rough. Do you stay clear about who you are when someone tampers with your sense of self? Or do you fall apart? Can you calm yourself when you’re upset or hurt, or do you need someone else to comfort you? When your relationships are struggling, do you overreact and run away from (or cling to) someone else? Do you accomplish those difficult things that need to be done to meet your goals, or do you give up, bail out, or goof off? These Four Points of determine the strength or weakness of your sense of self.