

# **The Crucible 4 Points of Balance™**

## **by Dr. David Schnarch, Ph.D.**

### **What are the Crucible 4 Points of Balance?**

#### **Holding on to yourself in relationships**

One of the most important things in life is becoming a solid individual. And another important thing is to have meaningful relationships. Two of the most powerful human drives are our urge to control our own lives (autonomy), and our urge for relationship with others (attachment). One of the biggest tasks of adulthood is being able to balance these two urges, and one of the most common problems is having too much of one, and not enough of the other. People often feel claustrophobic or controlled in committed relationships, or feel like they can't be their true self in their relationships, or feel like their sense of self is starting to disappear and they don't know who they are any more. Others are constantly worried about "abandonment," or "safety and security," and constantly press their partner for "commitment," and "unconditional love."

The ability to balance our needs for autonomy and attachment is called *differentiation*. Differentiation is a scientific process that occurs in all species. For humans, it is about becoming more of a unique individual and a solid person through relationships with others.

### **The Crucible 4 Points of Balance are:**

- How we operationalize differentiation in practical terms. They help you put science into practice.
- Our unique way of helping you become more grounded, adaptive, creative, and mature ("better differentiated").

The 4 Points of Balance come from distilling over 30 years of clinical experience. They are many things:

- Core organizing principles of our Intensive Therapy Program, from which they were developed.
- Part of our programmatic efforts to help people around the world to live better lives.
- Hallmark of the Crucible Institute, the flagship of our programs and services.

### **The 4 Points of Balance can help you when you really need help.**

- When you really need help you need to keep the help simple.
- There are just 4 things to remember.
- Easy to memorize, understand and recall when things get tough.

When your life is a mess, or you're under massive stress or you don't know what to do, your best move is always to hold on to the Crucible 4 Points of Balance.

The beauty of the 4 Points of Balance is that they look simple at first, but they are also incredibly sophisticated. The more you grow as a person, the deeper and more profound you understand them. Many people first find the 4 Points of Balance at difficult times in their lives and go on to use them as a way of life.

- These are not just great ideas or catchy phrases,
- They are powerful multi-faceted tools that can help you in every aspect of your life.

Each of the 4 Points of Balance is important. And together they provide a foundation for a healthy life.



## **1st Point of Balance: Solid Flexible Self™**

Many people lack a solid sense of themselves. They have no real identity of their own.

- They get emotionally claustrophobic or overly dependent in committed relationships.
- Or they're rigid, brittle, controlling, and bend their relationships to fit their own needs and wants.
- Or they become increasingly dependent--emotionally fused--with their partner.

To the degree you lack a solid sense of self you depend on a reflected sense of self. You depend on getting a positive reflected sense of self from other people. Many people say they want intimacy, but what they're looking for is:

- Validation,
- Acceptance,
- Unconditional love

There's nothing wrong with wanting to feel validated, accepted and dearly loved. But if you depend on a reflected sense of self, you crash when these aren't forthcoming, and you spend lots of time talking about "safety and security," "abandonment," and vulnerability.

When you have **solid flexible self**:

- You have an internalized set of core values by which you run your life.
- You have a sense of your own self worth that perseveres through hard time.
- You can maintain your own viewpoints and sense of direction when others pressure you to conform.
- You draw your sense of personal stability, values, and direction from within yourself, which comes from frequently confronting yourself (from the best in yourself) that you could be wrong.
- You don't always have to be right, and you don't crash when you're wrong.

Solid Flexible Self is not a rigid self. Being able to adapt and change when prudent is just as important as staying the course. Flexibility:

- lets you learn from your mistakes.
- lets you change roles when your children leave home or you retire.
- lets other people to be right sometimes.
- makes room for your partner in your relationship.

**Solid Flexible Self** lets you stand on your own two feet in a relationship--without always standing on your partner's toes.



## **2nd Point of Balance: Quiet Mind & Calm Heart™ - Soothe your own mind and heart**

The second basis of emotionally healthy living involves handling your own emotional inner world. Quiet Mind & Calm Heart is our way of helping you do that. There are two inter-related parts to developing an emotionally healthy inner world.

- Your thoughts
- Your feelings and emotions
- Your body's physical response to both

This means getting control of where all these take place. In practical terms this means three things:

- Quieting your mind
- Calming your heart
- Focusing on your physical reactions

In practice this means:

- Controlling your anxiety so it doesn't run away with you
- Handling your feelings and emotions
- Soothing your emotional bruises
- Monitoring your body

Many people have difficulty soothing their own emotions and/or calming their anxiety. Developing **Quiet Mind & Calm Heart** not only makes your own life better, it lets other people live better too.



## **3rd Point of Balance: Grounded Responding™-Getting emotionally grounded**

**Over-reacting** to tense or anxiety-filled situations is a common problem. Unbalanced, untimely, or disproportionate responses are one of the most common ways people ruin their lives. This is NOT grounded responding. This includes people:

- with explosive tempers with "short fuses"
- who say cutting things in difficult conversations.
- who break collaborative alliances whenever they get hurt.
- who are always yelling at their kids.
- who go to pieces over little things,

**Under-reacting** (avoidance) is also NOT Grounded Responding. It's not as obvious and more socially acceptable. Sometimes avoidance masquerades as Grounded Responding but it's not. It is commonly excused as procrastination. You're not making grounded responses if you fail to react or take action when necessary.

- When your kids need discipline and you're just not feeling like doing it.
- You're concerned your child is showing signs of learning disabilities but you don't seek help.
- You know your partner's having an affair, but you say nothing because you don't want to upset the status quo.

**Grounded Responding** involves making modulated responses to people, events, and situations. There's an old saying that completely contradicts common emphasis on expressing feelings and frustrations. It says, *"Marriage is improved by the two or three things not said each day."*



## **4th Point of Balance: Meaningful Endurance™ - Tolerating discomfort for growth**

Of all things that determine success in life, perhaps the most important is Meaningful Endurance, the 4th Point of Balance. Very little gets accomplished in life without Meaningful Endurance. Endurance increases your chances of success in marriage, parenting, families, and careers.

Meaningful Endurance is the basis of mastery. You cannot master a new skill, refine your abilities, develop your talent, learn new things, or expand your personality without Meaningful Endurance.

- Sticking with things so you can accomplish your goals
- Making yourself do what needs to be done, even when you don't want to do it
- Absorbing hardship and disappointment, bouncing back after defeat
- Withstanding stress

Meaningful Endurance is not blind perseverance, stubbornness, or refusal to face facts. It is not stupid pain-for-no-purpose. It is not simply high pain tolerance, or accepting a lousy relationship. Meaningful Endurance is about tolerating pain for growth. If there's no growth, it's not *meaningful*. Many people lack Meaningful Endurance.