

# Balanced and Blessed: Focusing on Spiritual and Physical Wellness to Improve Attitude and Productivity

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## **Background That Led to Your Inquiry:**

As a wife and mother in an energy-filled home and principal of a bustling elementary school I found that I was struggling to be personally balanced. I struggled with taking time for my spiritual, emotional, and physical well being.

I realized that I can only pour from my cup into others, if I have first filled my own cup. I was not spending time in filling my cup and this project afforded me the opportunity to do so. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to focus on spiritual gratitude, physical exercise, and healthy food choices to create a more balanced and blessed version of myself to in-turn, better serve others.

## **Statement of Your Wondering:**

With this purpose, I wondered if focusing on my physical and spiritual wellness on a consistent basis improve my overall attitude and productivity in both personal and professional ways.

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into my wonderings, I set three action steps into place with a data collection process for each. Afterwards, I analyzed my data to reflect on the findings of this action research project.

First, I implemented "Blessings Boulevard". Each day, set aside a portion of my commute to work to have a morning prayer time, centered around being grateful for the blessings in my life and centering my day in a positive fashion. Secondly, I implemented, physical exercise, by working to engage in physical exercise three times a week. Third, I strived to make healthy food choices. I focused on planning for and consuming only healthy snacks during my identified most tempting and hungry time of day (3pm - 5pm) during the week.

I collected the data by using a "Balanced and Blessed Log Sheet" on which I logged prayer time (P), exercise (E), and healthy/unhealthy/both/no snacks (H/U/B/N) were consumed from 3-5pm. I recorded each of these every day for a seven-week period.

## Balanced and Blessed IPLI Action Research Project Log Sheet

Daily Entry Code:

P - Prayer Time

E - Exercise

H/U/B/N - Healthy/Unhealthy/Both/None Snacks

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
2/5 P — B	2/6 P E H	2/7 P — H	2/8 P E H	2/9 P — H	2/10 P E H	2/11 P — B	7/7 - P 3 - E 5/7 - H
2/12 P — B	2/13 P E H	2/14 P — —	2/15 P — H	2/16 P E H	2/17 P E B	2/18 P — U	7/7 - P 3 - E 3 - H
2/19 P — U	2/20 P — U	2/21 P E H	2/22 P — B	2/23 P — H	2/24 P — H	2/25 P E U	7/7 - P 2 - E 3 - H
2/26 P — B	2/27 P E H	2/28 P — H	3/1 P E H	3/2 P — H	3/3 P E H	3/4 P E B	7/7 - P 4 - E 5 - H
3/5 P E B	3/6 P — H	3/7 P — H	3/8 P — H	3/9 P — H	3/10 P — H	3/11 P — B	7/7 - P 1 - E 5 - H
3/12 P — B	3/13 P — H	3/14 P — U	3/15 E P H	3/16 P E B	3/17 P — U	3/18 P E H	7 - P 2 - E 4 - 3
3/19 P E U	3/20 P E H	3/21 P — B	3/22 P — B	3/23 P E H	3/24 P — B	3/25 P E H	7 - P 4 - E 3 - H

After the seven-week logging period, I was able to analyze the data in a few ways. I looked at each component for overall progress towards my goals, searched for trend data or patterns in the data, and determined the overall impact of each data point on the general outcome.

### Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important points were discovered.

1. I found that having an accountability partner had a strong positive impact on the consistency of an action step.
2. I found that planning ahead and being prepared promoted success in the implementation of an action step.

When implementing action steps in my action research project, I learned that having an accountability partner had a strong positive impact on the consistency with which I carried out the action step. With regards to "Blessings Boulevard", my morning prayer and gratitude time, my data revealed that I implemented this step 49/49 days, or 100% of the time. My sweet son was my accountability partner because he commuted with me

to school each day. We had a visual prompt to remind us to act and we held each other lovingly accountable for doing it. I found that this behavior of starting my day with prayer resulted in improved attitude to start to my day, less stress in getting everything rolling in the mornings, helping me stay more tuned-in with God and my faith throughout the day, and provided positive modeling for my son.

In implementing the other action steps, I found that planning ahead and being intentionally prepared set me up to be more successful. With exercise, if I scheduled it on my actual calendar, I was more likely to accomplish it. My goal was to exercise 43% of the days. I struggled to meet this goal and only logged 19/49 or 39% and later realized that time was my biggest enemy. The only way to address this is to better control my time with intentional scheduling. When I do exercise, I feel increased energy and positivity about myself. With regards to healthy snacks, I found if I planned ahead and purchased healthy options that were readily available, I selected those. It was the days that I was out of my office, traveling, or unprepared that I ate more poorly. I chose healthy snacks 23/35 of school days, or 71% of the time. Being prepared upfront provided me the opportunity to be more successful, this increasing my energy for the evening, consuming fewer calories, having increased self confidence, and losing 4 lbs.

### **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

I have learned about myself as an individual and administrator in this action research process. First, I have learned that my life will be more balanced if I honor my identity and that which are highest priority in my well being. For me, my faith is fundamental to who I am. By spending time in appreciative prayer on a daily basis, I was fueling the most fundamental core of who I am. I also know that being healthy for myself is a high priority. Because these items are of such high priority, I found that I was more invested in being successful.

I think that this applies to me as an administrator because it was a nice reminder that I am a human being first and being an administrator is just one of the several hats I wear. This role is a very important and demanding aspect of my world, but it is not deserving of more time, energy, and attention than my own personal well-being.

As I move forward, I want to remember my learnings from this project. I am committed to not allowing myself to get swept away in the never-ending demands of this role again. Instead, I will plan ahead, identify accountability partners, and set personal wellness goals in order to be the best I can be in life and in work. I believe that these two pieces, personal well-being and vocational success behave much like a magnet. When sided correctly and both in their appropriate place, they stick together and strengthen each other. When turned incorrectly or out of sync, they repel each other, making both unsuccessful.

### **References:**

N/A