The Balanse Year · Workbook 01

Your vision comes first

Get clearer about what you want.
Your values. Your vision. Your next step.

Written by Loral Quinn

BALANSE

A Balanse workbook

Your Vision Comes First

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WRITTEN BY

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Welcome

A note from Loral

Welcome to the Balanse Year.

For years I looked successful from the outside. I built companies, led teams and delivered. Underneath, I had become very good at surviving and very bad at living. I thought stress was ambition. I thought busyness was success. I thought slowing down meant falling behind.

I didn't know what I was doing until I understood the patterns running my life and decided to consciously change them. At 53, I made a decision: I wasn't going to spend another decade waiting for life to begin.

That change started with a picture of where I actually wanted to go. Not a goal on a spreadsheet. An honest answer to a question most of us stop asking somewhere along the way: what do I actually want?

That's what this first workbook is for. Over the next week, you'll look at where you've been telling yourself things are "fine". You'll give yourself permission to want what you really want. You'll find the values underneath it, picture an ordinary day in the life you're building, and find the one part of your life that's quietly holding the rest back.

Then you'll take one step. Because a vision only changes your life when it changes what you do next.

Everything you write here matters. You'll come back to it every quarter, and at the end of the year your Life Audit will measure how far you've come against these pages. So be honest. Write what's true, not what sounds impressive. Nobody else needs to read it.

You don't need to have it all worked out. You don't need to feel ready. You only need to be willing to look honestly at your life, and to begin.

I'm so glad you're here.

The Balanse promise

- This isn't about doing more. It's about building a life that feels like yours.
- No overhauls. One honest look, one clear direction, one next right step.
- Progress, not perfection. You're allowed to begin exactly where you are.

Before you begin

How to use this workbook

This workbook has six parts. Each one opens with a full article to read slowly, then gives you space to reflect, write and decide. There's far more room than you think you'll need. Use it.

Your week

Day 1	Part 1 and Part 2: "fine", and what you actually want	60 minutes
Day 2	Part 3: your values	45 minutes
Day 3	Part 4: your 10-year Tuesday	60 minutes
Day 4	Part 5: your weakest pillar	45 minutes
Day 5	Part 6: bring the dream into today	45 minutes
Days 6–7	Your daily action, letter to your future self and closing ritual	15 minutes a day

How to get the most from it

- **Type or write.** Every writing space is fillable on a laptop. Or print it and write by hand. Writing by hand slows you down, which is often the point.
- **Read the articles first.** They're there to change how you see the question before you answer it.
- **Don't edit as you go.** Write the first true thing. You can make sense of it later.
- **Notice your body.** When a question makes you tense, sigh or want to skip it, that's usually the one that matters most. Stay with it.
- **Keep this file safe.** You'll return to it at your 90-day check-in and in your end-of-year Life Audit.

A note on support

This workbook is a reflection tool, not a substitute for therapy or medical care. If anything here brings up more than you can hold on your own, please talk to someone you trust or your GP. Anywhere in the UK, Samaritans are free, 24 hours a day, on 116 123.

Before you begin

Where you are today

Before you read anything, take a snapshot. You'll compare it with how you feel at the end of the week, and again in 90 days.

Today's date

What made you pick up this workbook now?

In three words, how does your life feel right now?

What would you love to be different by the end of this week?

What's the part of you that doesn't want to look too closely? What is it worried about?

Part 1

The hidden cost of being “fine”

Before you can decide where you’re going, you need an honest look at where you are. This part is about the word most of us use to avoid that look.

The most dangerous place to be in life isn’t unhappy. It’s fine.

The hidden cost of being “fine”

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate." Carl Jung

Lately, I've been noticing how often conversations start and end the same way. "How are you?" "I'm fine."

What "fine" actually is

"Fine" sounds neutral. Harmless, even. But most of the time, it's not an accurate description. It's a shortcut. A way of compressing complex emotions into something socially acceptable. A way of avoiding deeper conversations. A way of moving on quickly instead of pausing long enough to ask: what am I actually feeling right now?

Psychologists sometimes describe this as emotional compression. When we simplify our emotional experience into a single neutral label, we lose access to the information our feelings are trying to give us.

Emotions are signals. They tell us what matters to us. What needs attention. What needs to change. When everything becomes "fine," those signals slowly become quieter. And over time, we stop hearing them.

The problem isn't the word itself. The problem is what it slowly replaces.

1. It makes you lose touch with what you actually feel

"Fine" is often what we say when we don't have the space or safety to say more. But when every emotion gets translated into "fine," something subtle happens. You stop checking in with what's really there.

Not just the difficult emotions, but the positive ones too. Excitement. Curiosity. Pride. Gratitude. Joy. All of them become flattened into the same neutral response.

Psychological research shows that emotional awareness is strongly linked to wellbeing. The more precisely we can identify our emotions, the better we are able to regulate them. But when everything becomes "fine," emotional awareness slowly fades.

> *The more often you say "I'm fine," the less you actually notice how you are.*

2. It keeps you in place longer than you need to be

Your routine is fine. Your work is fine. Your relationships are fine. Nothing feels urgent enough to change. But nothing feels meaningful enough to fully engage with either. So you stay where you are.

And over time, in that in-between space, something subtle begins to happen. You lose touch with what would actually feel good. What excites you. What energises you. What you might want that's different or more.

The desire doesn't disappear. It simply becomes quieter.

> *"Fine" keeps life stable, but it can also keep it small.*

3. It puts you on autopilot and softens your curiosity

When everything feels "fine," you stop paying close attention. You move through your days on autopilot. The choices feel familiar, so you don't revisit them. And slowly, the questions that once guided you become quieter. Questions like: What is no longer working? What do I actually want? What would make my life feel more meaningful?

Curiosity needs a small amount of friction. A sense that something could be explored, improved, or changed. But when everything feels "fine," the motivation to explore disappears.

> *"Fine" keeps life running, but it also keeps you from fully living it.*

4. It disguises itself as strength

"Fine" can sound very reasonable. "I'm okay." "I'll deal with it." "It's not a big deal." And sometimes, that really is resilience. But sometimes it's something else.

Sometimes it's the instinct to minimise what you feel. To avoid disruption. To not make things complicated. To keep everything steady. It looks like strength from the outside. But internally, it can be a quiet form of avoidance.

Real resilience doesn't ignore emotions. It acknowledges them and then decides how to move forward.

> *Sometimes "fine" isn't acceptance. It's hesitation disguised as stability.*

5. It keeps your relationships on the surface

This might be where it matters most. When "fine" becomes your default answer, conversations stop there. People ask. You respond. And the moment passes.

What doesn't happen is the part that creates connection. The moment where you say a little more. Where someone understands you a little better. Where something real is shared.

Not every conversation needs depth. And not every moment needs vulnerability. But if everything stays at "fine," something important gets missed. Human beings are social creatures. Psychological research consistently shows that meaningful relationships are one of the strongest predictors of wellbeing and life satisfaction. And meaningful relationships require something beyond "fine."

> *"Fine" protects you from vulnerability, but it also keeps you from living an intentional life.*

The alternative to "fine"

The alternative isn't oversharing. It isn't analysing every emotion. It's something much simpler. Awareness.

Just pausing for a moment and asking yourself: how am I actually feeling today? Not the socially acceptable answer. The real one. Because the moment you become aware of how you feel, something shifts. You move from autopilot to intention. And that's where change begins.

A simple question for today

So the next time someone asks, "How are you?", you don't have to give a long answer. But maybe, just for yourself, pause for a moment before you reply. Ask the quieter question underneath it. How am I really doing today?

Because the life you build isn't created in big, dramatic moments. It's created in the small moments when you notice what's actually going on, and choose to live with intention. Because your day creates your life.

Key takeaway

"Fine" isn't really a feeling. It's a filter. And when you look at your life through that filter for too long, it starts to quietly limit everything: your emotions, your relationships, your growth. The alternative is simple: awareness. Just pausing long enough to ask yourself how you actually feel.

From "The hidden cost of being fine" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

Name what's really there

"Fine" covers a lot of ground. Most of the time there's something more specific underneath it, and naming it precisely is the first step to doing something about it. Use these words when "fine" is all you can find.

Tired	drained, depleted, flat, worn out, running on empty
Uneasy	anxious, restless, unsettled, on edge, overwhelmed
Low	sad, disappointed, lonely, discouraged, empty
Frustrated	irritated, resentful, stuck, impatient, trapped
Disconnected	numb, distant, going through the motions, on autopilot
Settled	calm, content, steady, safe, at ease
Good	hopeful, proud, grateful, relieved, satisfied
Alive	excited, curious, energised, joyful, inspired

Try this for seven days

- Three times a day (morning, midday and evening) pause and finish the sentence "Right now I feel…" without using the word fine.
- Notice which words come up most often. They're telling you where to look.

Part 1 · Reflect

The “fine” audit

Go through each area of your life. Write what you usually say when someone asks, then what’s actually true.

Area of life	What I usually say	What’s actually true
Work and purpose		
Money		
Body and health		
Partner or love life		
Family		
Friendships		
Home		
Rest and fun		
Me, on my own		

If nothing changed

Where in your life are you telling yourself things are “fine”? What would you say if you were completely honest?

If nothing changed, where would your life be in 10 years? Describe it honestly: your work, your body, your relationships, how you feel.

What has “fine” cost you? Think about your energy, your relationships and the things you’ve stopped wanting.

What is “fine” protecting you from? What would you have to feel, say or do if you stopped using it?

Part 2

What do you actually want?

Not what would look impressive. Not what other people expect. This part gives you permission to want, without justifying it.

You can't intentionally build a life you've never allowed yourself to imagine.

What the @&£k... do you actually want?

Not what would look impressive. Not what other people expect from you. Not what seems sensible, achievable or appropriate for someone your age. What do you actually want?

The question we stop asking

It's a surprisingly difficult question to answer. We become so used to responding to life that we stop consciously creating it. We meet deadlines, pay bills, care for other people and keep everything moving. We pursue goals we think we should want, then wonder why achieving them doesn't make us feel fulfilled. Somewhere along the way, our real desires get buried beneath responsibility, fear and the need to be accepted.

Begin with the truth

So begin with the truth. What do you love? What do you hate? What are you passionate about? What do you want more of, and what are you no longer willing to tolerate? If there were no expectations to meet, no one to disappoint and no possibility of failure, what would you choose?

The truth is, you get to decide whether you stay in your mediocre, average or even shitty life, or whether you decide to change and take action.

You don't have to justify the answer. Wanting more joy, freedom, rest, adventure, love, money, impact or meaning doesn't make you selfish or ungrateful. Your desires are information. They show you where you feel most alive and point towards the life that might be waiting for you.

Decide that it matters

But knowing what you want isn't enough. You have to decide that it matters. Focus your attention on it. Commit to it. Take the first intelligent action before fear talks you out of it.

You don't need to understand the entire route. You only need to take the next right step. Action creates evidence, evidence builds belief and belief creates momentum.

> *Action creates evidence, evidence builds belief and belief creates momentum.*

Achievement and fulfilment aren't the same thing

Achievement is reaching the destination. Fulfilment comes from who you become along the way, how you grow and what you're able to contribute because you grew. The life you really want will usually contain both.

You may change your mind as you move towards it. That doesn't mean you got it wrong. It means you're learning more about yourself. Your vision isn't a contract. It's a direction.

Ask yourself again

The Balanse method helps you stop drifting long enough to hear your own voice again. It helps you connect the dots between what you think, how you feel, what you repeatedly do and the life those patterns are creating. Because you can't intentionally build a life you've never allowed yourself to imagine.

So ask yourself again, without editing the answer: what do I really want? What would I choose if I finally believed I was allowed to choose?

Then do one thing today that moves you towards it.

From "What the @&£k…" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

Part 2 · Going deeper

The power of desire

Suppressing desire doesn't make it go away. It just goes underground, and we feel flat and quietly judged by ourselves for wanting. Healthy desire says "I want this." Attachment says "I can't be happy without this." Desire motivates. Attachment controls.

How to use desire wisely

- Acknowledge what you want, without judgement.
- Ask why you want it: the surface want, and the deeper need underneath.
- Take action towards it, and hold it lightly. Want, but don't cling.

Adapted from "The power of desire: why wanting matters" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

Your want list

Write 40 things you want. Big and small, serious and silly, for this week and for the rest of your life. Don't edit, rank or justify. If you get stuck, keep going: the most honest wants often come after the obvious ones run out.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____
7 _____
8 _____
9 _____
10 _____
11 _____
12 _____
13 _____
14 _____
15 _____
16 _____
17 _____
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25 _____
26 _____
27 _____
28 _____
29 _____
30 _____
31 _____
32 _____
33 _____
34 _____
35 _____
36 _____
37 _____
38 _____
39 _____
40 _____

Love, hate, more, no more

	Write freely
What I love	
What I hate	
What I want more of	
What I'm no longer willing to tolerate	

If you were allowed to choose

If there were no expectations to meet, no one to disappoint and no possibility of failure, what would you choose?

Pick three wants from your list. For each one, what's the deeper need underneath it?

A bigger house might really be about space and peace. A new job might really be about being valued.

Part 3

Your values are the blueprint

Your values are the design brief for your life. This part helps you name them, test them and see where you're living against them.

A decision can still be uncomfortable and be completely aligned.

Your values are the blueprint for your life

Most of us think we know what our values are. But values aren't simply words we choose because they sound good. They're the principles we use to make decisions, decide what we'll tolerate and shape the life we're building. To be true to ourselves, we have to be honest about what genuinely matters to us, not what we've been taught should matter.

The gap between what you value and how you live

When your life feels confusing, heavy or out of balance, it's often because there is a gap between what you value and how you're living. You may value freedom but feel trapped by your commitments. You may value wellbeing but constantly put yourself last. You may value creativity but spend every day reacting to other people's priorities. Nothing has necessarily gone dramatically wrong, but something inside you knows your life no longer fits.

Your values act like a personal compass. They won't remove every difficult decision, but they can help you recognise which direction is right for you. Instead of asking, "What's everyone else doing?" or "What will make people approve of me?", you can ask, "Which choice brings me closer to the person I want to be?"

> *A decision can still be uncomfortable and be completely aligned.*

Values as a design brief

At Balanse, we think of values as part of the design brief for your life. In design thinking, you begin by understanding the person, the problem and the outcome you are trying to create. The same approach can be used personally.

Your values become the blueprint against which you test your choices, routines, relationships and goals. Does this job support the life I want? Does this relationship reflect the way I want to love and be loved? Are my habits reinforcing what matters to me, or pulling me further away from it?

Your values are allowed to evolve

What mattered most to you at 25 may not be what matters at 45 or 55. New experiences, relationships, responsibilities and losses can change how you see the world. That doesn't mean you were wrong before. It means you've grown. The important thing is to revisit your values rather than continuing to follow an old blueprint for a life you have already outgrown.

Feedback can also help you refine them. Notice when you feel energised, proud, resentful, restricted or deeply at peace. These feelings offer information. Resentment may show you

where a boundary has been crossed. Envy may reveal a freedom you want for yourself. Satisfaction may show you that you're acting in alignment. The goal isn't to seek validation from other people, but to pay attention to what your experiences are teaching you.

Make your values practical

Try choosing five values that feel essential to the next chapter of your life. Then define what each one means in practice. If you choose freedom, does that mean financial independence, more control over your time or permission to express yourself? If you choose family, does that mean being available, creating traditions or having healthier boundaries? A value becomes useful when you can see how it changes your behaviour.

Then ask yourself:

- Where is my current life aligned with these values?
- Where am I compromising them?
- What am I continuing to tolerate that no longer reflects who I am?
- What is one decision I could make differently this week?

Key takeaway

You don't find yourself once and remain unchanged forever. You continue to meet yourself through the choices you make. Your habits gradually become your direction, and your direction eventually becomes your life.

You don't need to redesign everything today. Start with one honest decision. One boundary. One habit. One conversation. One next right action that brings your life a little closer to what you say matters.

Because balance is not about giving everything equal attention. It's about making sure the life you are creating remains true to the person you are becoming.

From "Your values are the blueprint for your life" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

A values list

Read slowly. Mark every value that makes you feel something, then narrow it down on the next page. If a value that matters to you isn't here, add it.

- [ ] Abundance
- [ ] Adventure
- [ ] Authenticity
- [ ] Balance
- [ ] Beauty
- [ ] Belonging
- [ ] Calm
- [ ] Care
- [ ] Challenge
- [ ] Community
- [ ] Compassion
- [ ] Connection
- [ ] Contribution
- [ ] Courage
- [ ] Creativity
- [ ] Curiosity
- [ ] Faith
- [ ] Family
- [ ] Financial security
- [ ] Fitness
- [ ] Freedom
- [ ] Friendship
- [ ] Fun
- [ ] Generosity
- [ ] Growth
- [ ] Gratitude
- [ ] Health
- [ ] Home
- [ ] Honesty
- [ ] Humour
- [ ] Impact
- [ ] Independence
- [ ] Integrity
- [ ] Joy
- [ ] Justice
- [ ] Kindness
- [ ] Knowledge
- [ ] Leadership
- [ ] Learning
- [ ] Love
- [ ] Loyalty
- [ ] Nature
- [ ] Peace
- [ ] Play
- [ ] Presence
- [ ] Recognition
- [ ] Respect
- [ ] Rest
- [ ] Security
- [ ] Service
- [ ] Simplicity
- [ ] Spirituality
- [ ] Stability
- [ ] Success
- [ ] Travel
- [ ] Trust
- [ ] Wealth
- [ ] Wellbeing
- [ ] Wisdom
- [ ] Wonder

Values that matter to me that aren't on the list:

Your five values

Choose the five values that feel most essential to the next chapter of your life. Then make each one practical: what does it actually mean, and what would you see if you were living it?

My value	What it means to me in practice	What I'd be doing if I lived it
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Your top three

Now narrow your five to three, in order. The test is conflict: imagine two of them pulling in opposite directions, like a family event and an important work meeting. Which one wins?

Rank	Value	Why it matters more than the ones below it
1		
2		
3		

Describe a real decision you're facing. What would each of your top three values tell you to do?

Where you're living against them

Where is your life already aligned with these values?

Where are you compromising them?

What are you continuing to tolerate that no longer reflects who you are?

What is one decision you could make differently this week?

Your feelings as feedback

Over the next few days, notice when these feelings show up. Write down what was happening, and which value was being honoured or crossed.

When I felt	What was happening	The value underneath
Energised or proud		
Resentful		
Envious		
Restricted		
Deeply at peace		

Part 4

Your 10-year Tuesday

Big goals are easy to write and hard to feel. Ordinary days are where a life is actually lived. This part is the heart of the workbook.

You're not starting from nothing. You're starting with everything your life has already taught you.

How to create your dream life

Creating your dream life is not about escaping the one you have. It is about becoming more intentional about what comes next. It means pausing long enough to ask yourself what you genuinely want, rather than continuing to follow expectations, habits or plans that no longer feel right.

Begin with your authentic self

Before you create a vision for your future, you need to reconnect with the person creating it. Who are you when you are not trying to please, prove or perform? What makes you feel most alive? What have you always been drawn towards? What have you quietly outgrown?

Your authentic self can become buried beneath responsibilities, relationships, work and the roles you have learned to play. You may have spent years being the capable one, the supportive one or the person who keeps everything moving. Creating your dream life begins when you make space for your own needs, desires and identity again.

> *You're not starting from nothing. You're starting with everything your life has already taught you.*

Develop a growth mindset

A dream can feel impossible when you compare it with your current circumstances. The distance between where you are and where you want to be may appear overwhelming.

This is where a growth mindset matters. Instead of asking, "Can I really do this?" ask, "What could I learn, change or try next?"

You don't need to know exactly how everything will happen. You only need to believe that you can grow into the person capable of creating it. Every new chapter requires experimentation. Some ideas will work, others will not, and many will evolve as you do. None of this means you have failed. It means you are designing rather than drifting.

Build your vision around your values

A life can look successful from the outside and still feel deeply wrong on the inside. This often happens when our choices are disconnected from our values.

Your values are the qualities that make life meaningful to you: freedom, family, creativity, security, contribution, adventure, connection, wellbeing or something entirely different. They become the foundations of your personal blueprint. Ask yourself:

- What matters most to me now?

- What am I no longer willing to sacrifice?
- What do I want more of in my everyday life?

Your values help you make decisions. They allow you to recognise which opportunities belong in your future and which ones would simply recreate the life you are trying to leave behind.

Define your ideal state

Your dream life isn't only about what you want to have or achieve. It's also about how you want to feel.

Perhaps you want to feel peaceful rather than permanently rushed. Energised rather than depleted. Secure rather than constantly worried about money. Connected rather than lonely. Purposeful rather than stuck.

Imagine an ordinary day in your future life. Where do you wake up? How does your morning begin? What kind of work do you do? Who is around you? How do you care for your mind and body? What do your evenings feel like?

The more specific you become, the easier it is to recognise the practical changes that will move you closer to that life.

Create your grand life vision

Now allow yourself to think beyond what feels immediately realistic. What would you create if you stopped limiting the answer to what seems possible today? What would you pursue if age, fear, money, past disappointments and other people's opinions were temporarily removed from the equation?

Write your vision in the present tense. Describe what your life looks and feels like as though you are already living it. Include your wellbeing, relationships, work, purpose, finances, home, joy and personal growth.

This isn't about pretending that challenges don't exist. It is about giving yourself a direction. A clear vision helps you notice opportunities, make aligned decisions and stop automatically returning to familiar patterns.

Bring the dream into today

A vision only begins to change your life when it influences what you do next. You don't need to transform everything overnight. Choose one action that represents the future you are creating. Send the email. Make the appointment. Save the first £10. Take the walk. Apply for the role. Protect an hour for your idea. Have the conversation you have been avoiding.

Small actions matter because they provide evidence that change is already happening. Each intentional choice becomes a vote for the person you're becoming.

Key takeaway

Your past may explain where you are, but it doesn't have to determine where you go next. Things may not have happened according to the original plan, but the present moment still holds possibility.

Your life isn't finished. You're not too late, too old or too far behind. You're allowed to imagine something different, create a new blueprint and begin again.

Your dream life doesn't appear all at once. You design it, choose it and build it, one honest decision at a time.

From "How to create your dream life" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

Part 4 · Going deeper

How to write a vision you can feel

A vision works when it's clear enough to recognise when it arrives, and vivid enough that your body responds when you read it. Build it in five layers.

The what	The desire in its plainest form. *"More freedom."*
The specific	Add the details. Who, where, how much, how often. *"Fridays free to work on my own projects."*
The measurable	The part that can be counted, so you'll know when it has arrived. *"Four Fridays a month by the summer."*
The feeling	How you want to feel once it's here. This is the part your body will recognise. *"Spacious. Trusted. Like my time is mine."*
The full vision	All of it at once, in the present tense, as though you're standing in it. *"It's a Friday in June. No meetings, no inbox. The morning is mine to build what I care about."*

Before you picture the future

Who are you when you're not trying to please, prove or perform?

What makes you feel most alive? What have you always been drawn towards?

What have you quietly outgrown?

How you want to feel

Your dream life is as much about how you feel as what you have. Write how you often feel now, and how you want to feel instead.

Instead of feeling...	I want to feel...	What would help

Your 10-year Tuesday: morning

Four rules for writing your vision

- **Present tense.** "I wake up", not "I will wake up".
- **Senses, not summaries.** What can you see, hear, smell and touch?
- **Ordinary, not perfect.** A real Tuesday, with real errands, not a holiday.
- **Yours, not theirs.** If it's what you think you should want, cross it out.

It's an ordinary Tuesday, 10 years from now. Describe your morning, from the moment you wake up.

Where do you wake up? Who's there? How does your body feel? What do you do first? What does the room look like?

Your 10-year Tuesday: daytime

Describe the middle of your day.

What work are you doing, and where? Who are you working with? What are you creating or contributing? How do you take care of yourself?

Your 10-year Tuesday: evening

Describe your evening, until you fall asleep.

Who do you spend it with? What do you eat? What do you talk about? How do you feel as the day ends?

Your grand life vision

Now think beyond what feels realistic today. Take age, fear, money and other people's opinions out of the equation. Write a line or two for each part of your life, in the present tense.

	In my grand life vision...
Wellbeing	
Relationships	
Work	
Purpose	
Finances	
Home	
Joy	
Personal growth	

Part 5

Your weakest pillar

Your life rests on four pillars: mind, body, relationships and purpose. This part shows you which one is quietly holding the others back.

Strengthen the weakest wall, and the whole house steadies.

Your weakest pillar is bleeding into the others

There are no compartments. There's one life, with four load-bearing walls. Life isn't lived in your strongest pillar. Your lowest pillar isn't your failure. It's your ripple point. Strengthen the weakest wall and the whole house steadies.

The ripple effect

Here's the reframe that changes how you use this information: your lowest pillar isn't your failure. It's your ripple point.

The four pillars (mind, body, relationships, purpose) aren't separate. They're one system. Strengthen the weakest one and it lifts the other three. Let it keep leaking and it quietly drags the other three down, no matter how hard you work on them.

I know this pattern from the inside. When I finally did my own version of this audit, I realised I had normalised exhaustion. I thought stress was ambition. I thought busyness was success. I thought slowing down meant falling behind. My strongest pillars were carrying my whole identity, and the leak was everywhere else.

> *A life can look successful externally while being deeply misaligned internally.*

How the leak actually works

Every pattern running underneath your days has the same three-part structure. A focus: where your energy goes. A meaning: the story you tell yourself about it. And an action: what you actually do as a result.

Take a woman who scores her relationships at three. Her focus: work and individual tasks. The meaning she's assigned: relationships will wait. The action that follows: isolation, or surface-level connection.

And watch what happens next, because this is how one weak pillar leaks into the others. The isolation feeds turning further inward. Turning inward feeds the overwork. The overwork confirms the story that there's no time for people. Round and round, quietly, for years.

> *Focus. Meaning. Action. Repeated often enough, it becomes identity.*

Why you don't fix everything at once

Fixing everything at once is how every January plan dies. You overhaul the whole life, run on willpower for three weeks, and collapse back to baseline. We don't do overhauls here.

We start where the ripple is biggest. One pillar. The lowest one. That's your leverage point, and I'll be honest with you, it's usually the one you've been avoiding. The low score isn't news to you. It's the thing you already knew and didn't want to look at, which is exactly why it's been leaking for years.

Once you can see your version of the loop (your focus, your story, your default action) you can change it. Not by willpower. By interrupting it at any of the three points. Change what you focus on, question the story, or take one different action, and the whole loop starts to loosen. And because the pillars are one system, the recovery ripples too: work on the weakest one and the others begin to lift with it.

This is why the Balanse sequence begins with Reset before Design. You cannot intentionally design a life you have not honestly examined. Diagnosis comes before intervention. Every time.

Key takeaway

Your lowest pillar isn't where you're failing. It's where your leverage is. Stop spreading your effort across a whole-life overhaul, and put it where the ripple is biggest: the one place you've been avoiding.

Strengthen the weakest wall, and the whole house steadies. You probably already know which pillar is yours. It's the one you didn't want to look at just now.

From "Your weakest pillar is bleeding into the others" by Loral Quinn, on the Balanse blog.

Part 5 · Write

Score your four pillars

For each pillar, describe what it looks like in your 10-year vision. Then score where you are today, from 1 (it's struggling) to 10 (it's thriving). Go with your first answer.

Mind 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Score

How you think, learn, rest and talk to yourself. In my vision...

Body 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Score

Energy, movement, sleep, food and how you feel in your skin. In my vision...

Relationships 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Score

Partner, family, friends, community. Who knows the real you. In my vision...

Purpose 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Score

Your work, money, contribution and what you're building. In my vision...

Map the loop

My lowest pillar is _____

Every pattern has three parts. Map your own for this pillar. Be honest: it's usually the one you've been avoiding.

Focus. Where does your energy go instead of this pillar?

For example: work and getting tasks done.

Meaning. What story do you tell yourself about it?

For example: "Relationships will wait."

Action. What do you end up doing as a result?

For example: cancelling plans, or only ever catching up on the surface.

How is this pillar leaking into the other three?

Interrupt the loop

You don't break a loop with willpower. You interrupt it at any one of its three points. Choose where you'll start.

A new focus: what will you pay attention to instead?

A new story: what's a truer thing you could tell yourself?

One different action: what's the smallest thing you could do differently this week?

If this pillar went up by one point, what would change in the other three?

Part 6

Bring the dream into today

A vision only begins to change your life when it influences what you do next. This part turns everything you've written into one step.

Each intentional choice becomes a vote for the person you're becoming.

Your next 90 days

What would a one-point improvement in your lowest pillar look like in the next 90 days? Make it specific enough to recognise.

Look at your last seven days. What did you do that pointed towards your vision?

What did you do that pointed away from it?

The one action you will take this week:

When it gets hard

Psychologists call this an implementation intention: deciding in advance what you'll do when an obstacle shows up. It's one of the simplest ways to make a plan stick. It takes the shape "When this happens, I will…"

For example

- When I want to skip my walk because it's raining, I'll walk for ten minutes instead of thirty.
- When I hear myself say "I'm fine", I'll pause and find a truer word.

When this happens…	I will…

Who could support you with this? What will you ask them for?

Your seven days

One small action a day that points towards your vision. Do it first, before the day fills up. At night, write one line about what happened.

Day	My action today	What happened
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		
Day 7		

To finish

Closing ritual

Find somewhere quiet. Read your 10-year Tuesday out loud, slowly, from morning to evening. Notice how it feels in your body to say it. Then read this:

I am allowed to want this life.
I don't need to be ready. I need to be willing.
Every week from here, I'll take one step towards it.

Signed _____

Date _____

In three words, how does your life feel now? Look back at what you wrote on day one.

What did you learn about yourself this week?

To finish

A letter to your future self

Write to yourself one year from today. Tell her what you hope she's living, what you want her to remember, and what you're proud of her for starting.

Dear me,

To return to

Your 90-day check-in

Put a date in your calendar 90 days from today. When it arrives, come back to this page.

My check-in date _____

Has my lowest pillar moved, even a little? What's my score now?

Where am I still saying "fine" when it isn't?

What will I stop, start and continue for the next 90 days?

Does my 10-year Tuesday still feel true, or has it grown with me?

Notes

Keep going

Support between workbooks

Everything in this workbook works with just you and the page. If you'd like extra support between workbooks, BalanseOS, the Balanse web app, keeps you on track one small check-in at a time.

- **The 7-day Vision Challenge**
  Define your values, understand your drivers, design your ideal day, create your life vision and write your personal manifesto.
- **A 60-second daily check-in**
  Notice how you're really doing, before "fine" takes over.
- **Your Flow Score**
  See how your days are tracking across your mind, body, relationships and purpose.
- **Guided reflection**
  Prompts and support between sessions, so nothing slips. You stay the decision-maker.

START HERE · ABOUT 5 MINUTES

Take the Balanse Reset

See where your life may have drifted from what matters, which area needs the most care, and one small next step. At **balanseos.com/reset**

OPTIONAL · THE BALANSE WEB APP

If you'd like the app

Scan the code or visit balanseos.com to try it. If you already use it, pick up where you left off.

What comes next

- **Next week: Workbook 02, Never Confuse Motion With Progress.** Look honestly at where your time and attention go, and find the work you've been avoiding.
- **Want support from Loral?** Find the next step that fits you at **balanse.ai/next**

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