

Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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Sacrifice should be worth the Sacrifice

“Sometimes I wish I had your life,” my sister said to me. “You get to travel and meet all these amazing people and do all these amazing things,” she went on.

I interrupted her, “And sometimes I wish I had your life. You have a husband and a family; you get to spend time at home and see your friends.”

The lives we live are a bit of a straight-hair vs. curly-hair thing. We often want what we don't have. In reality, it's not about better or worse; it's just perception.

My sister made certain choices about the life she wanted. Those choices include a steady job, a husband and children. But balance and stability come at a cost. It is harder for her to be spontaneous. It is harder to just up and leave. My sister chose to build a family, and I envy that.

I chose a different path. I want to do things -- lots of things. I chose to devote my life to sharing a message. To do that, I travel, I meet lots of people and I get to do something I couldn't have imagined doing. This surreal life, however, comes at a cost. It is harder for me to date or meet someone I could even think about starting a family with; I don't see my friends as often as I would like and getting to spend time at home is a real treat. I often crave more stability.

On the other side, my sister doesn't want my life. She loves being a mom and loves the life she lives. But just now and then, she would like a little more excitement.

And, on balance, I don't want my sister's life. I'm grateful for the opportunities I've been given and for all the things I do. Only now and then, I would like the pace to slow down and have a little more predictability.

There is no decision that we can make that doesn't come with some sort of balance or sacrifice. I accept that my social life suffers for me to focus my energy on the movement -- to inspire people to do the things that inspire them. As momentum grows, as the movement is able to move on its own energy, I will be able to slow down my pace and focus more on my life at home. My sister is the same. As her family grows up and is able to move with its own energy, she will

be able to get away, take little vacations and not worry about the kids. It's all about balance.

I've learned that, no matter what path we choose, there is sacrifice. This week, I was in four cities, spoke at five engagements, stayed in four hotels, and took eight flights. That was all between Monday and Friday. But sacrifice is only debilitating or life-sucking if there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Sacrifice is worth it to get the things we want or live the lives we want to live, but those same sacrifices should be relatively short. A few weeks, months or years, but not the majority of our lives.

Any parent who tells their kids that they can't attend a school play or go to a soccer match because they have to work is kidding themselves. It's OK to miss a game or two or a performance here and there, but it's not all right to miss the majority of them. Sacrifice is putting up with something we don't want for the short term because it serves the greater good -- be that social change, as it is in my case, or raising a happy family, as it is in my sister's case. If the sacrifice has no end or becomes the norm, it's no longer a sacrifice; it's a life out of balance. That's accepting something we don't want as normal.

This week, I was rushing through an airport on my sixth flight of the week on the way to the fourth city of the week. It was late; I was tired. I thought about missing my flight and just getting on the next flight back to New York -- back home -- instead. I was rationalizing not showing up for an event. I called a friend of mine just to vent. "F*ck this sh*t," was how I greeted her when she picked up the phone. "It's not worth it," I went on. "I'm exhausted. I can't live a life like this. This is no life. I miss my friends, I want to go out on dates. Sh*t, I just want to spend more than two consecutive nights in my own bed." I genuinely didn't care about "the cause." I was exhausted.

And then, as if on cue, some guy calls out my name. I turn around, and he walks up to me with his hand outstretched to shake my hand. "I'm a big fan of your work," he said. I thought we'd met, I thought maybe he'd seen me speak somewhere. But it turned out, he hadn't. He was a principle in a school and had shown my TEDx video to the teachers and administrators to inspire them, to remind them why they do what they do.

In an instant, I was reminded why I do what I do. This is the impact of the movement we're all a part of. I was still exhausted. I was still fed up. But because of that one reminder, I was inspired again. In an instant, the sacrifice was worth it.

When I meet my fans, when I read the notes people send me, when I see the impact I can have on people's lives, and when my energy is focused on giving to

others, it's worth it. When my sister sees her kids growing up, when she watches her son and daughter do things that amaze the rest of us, when she can see the impact she has in someone's life, and when her energy is focused on giving to another, it's worth it.

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