



Beyond Balance: Go for Harmony Instead

Applying the Jabian Engagement Framework to your personal life.

BY [FRED JEWELL](#) AND [TRACY REZNIK](#)

Maintaining harmony and engagement in our personal lives is a constant struggle. The entire self-help industry is built on the discomfort we feel when our lives are in disharmony. A quick search for “achieving balance” on Amazon returns a list of over 2,000 books. But is “balance” the right word for what we seek in our lives? The idea of “work-life balance” has existed for decades, but by its nature is restricting and implies give-and-take between two concepts or activities often at odds with one another. In fact, engagement and fulfillment come from a collection of drivers. And while self-help books contain wisdom that can indeed improve our lives, in our experience a complete map of the drivers and influencers is missing.

In the [Fall 2016 issue](#) of the *Jabian Journal*, we began a 10-part series on the [Jabian Engagement Framework](#), a helpful tool that leaders can use to identify the emotional drivers behind a culture or a change and the levers they can use to influence those drivers. The Jabian Engagement Framework is targeted at leaders who are charged with optimizing the engagement of their workforce, managing change, and making investments that will enhance the overall satisfaction and

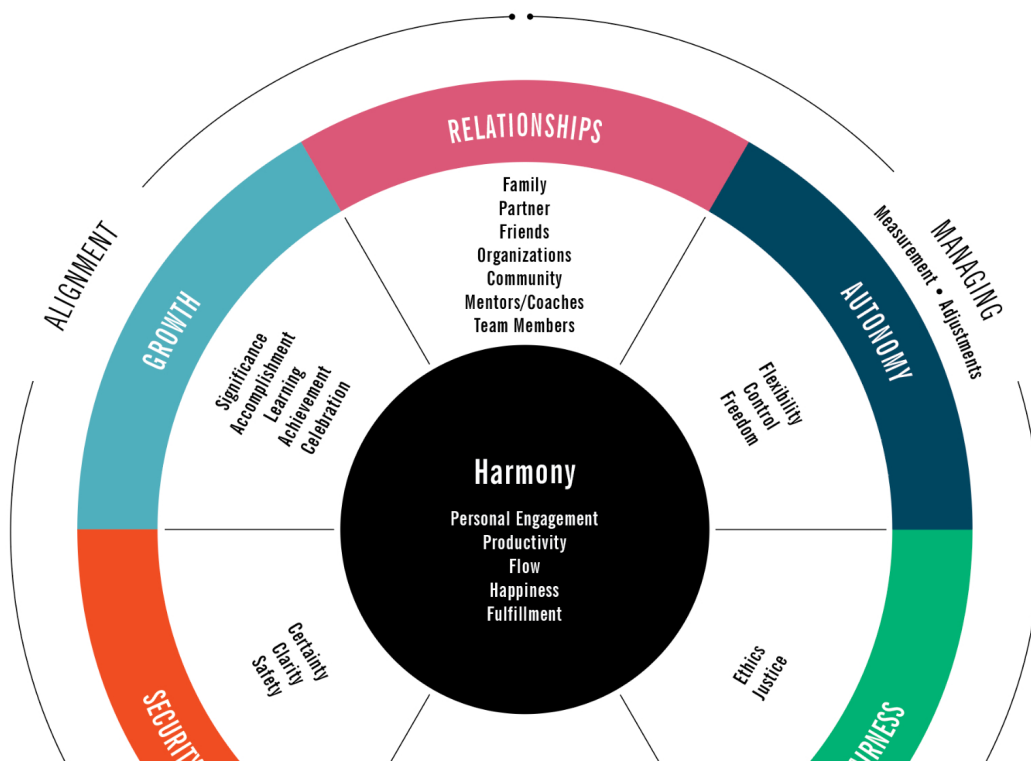
productivity of all the stakeholders in their business. When we've written and spoken about the Jabian Engagement Framework, we've always pointed out that it works with individuals, teams, organizations, and even entire societies. We've also recognized, and noted, that the "corporate" jargon describing the influencers in the model can interfere with applying it to our personal harmony and engagement – or to an individual we are coaching or mentoring. As such, we've tailored the Jabian Engagement Framework for use on a personal level.

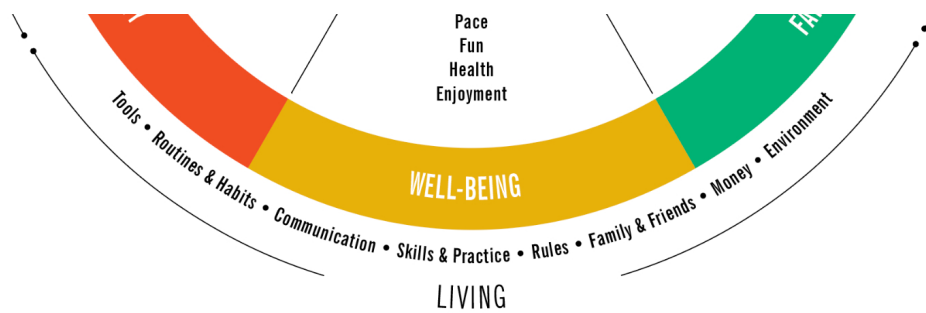
Like the Engagement Framework, the *Personal Engagement Framework* is a useful tool or checklist for understanding the emotions behind harmony and the actions we can take to improve our lives. It is easy to apply and can lead to insights and ideas we might otherwise never have considered that might just make life a little, or a lot, better.

At the center of the new framework (see Framework below) is "Harmony." People who are in harmony are engaged in their life and feel energized, productive, happy, and fulfilled. That's what we're all after, life's ultimate goal. And while harmony is different for all of us, there are only six drivers that contribute to it. Those drivers can be found in the wedges around the center circle: Growth, Relationships, Autonomy, Security, Fairness, and Well-Being. Not surprisingly, for those familiar with our Jabian Engagement Framework, they are the same drivers in our "corporate" version of the framework. We have, however, renamed many of the levers (located around the outside of the framework) that influence the drivers to make better use of words more familiar in our personal lives. With that clarified, let's dive in.

The Harmony Drivers

The six drivers of harmony: Growth, Relationships, Autonomy, Security, Fairness, and Well-Being, can be either positive or negative for any individual at any given time. Changes happen over the course of our lives and even minute-by-minute during the day. Those changes affect the harmony drivers, which influence, as one might discern, our sense of harmony/fulfillment/happiness. We describe the drivers that influence harmony next.





Growth

Accomplishing a goal, receiving a compliment, learning something new, achieving a personal best, winning a contest, outperforming our peers, and receiving a promotion are all examples of growth. Striving for that next achievement, pursuit, or chase is at the core of the growth driver. Personal setbacks, career stumbles, boredom, or stagnation can all negatively affect the growth driver.

Relationships

Social relationships are a key source of engagement. Human beings are social creatures, and we need a connection to others. Similarly, deep relationships – where we care about others and others care about us – are an important element of engagement. Happiness research shows that we need at least one or two intimate (not necessarily romantic) relationships in our lives to be truly happy, and the more relationships and connectedness we have, the happier we are. It's meaningful relationships that are important here, not the number of social media "friends" we have. Conflict in any form will stifle the relationship driver, as will the loss or absence of a meaningful relationship.

Autonomy

Choosing our work, the people we work with, and how, when, and where we do our job drives harmony. Conversely, we resent being micromanaged, having to perform tedious tasks that keep us from doing more fulfilling projects we love, or being tied to arbitrary schedules that deprive us of the flexibility to balance hectic work and family commitments. Autonomy is also important in our personal lives. Having the freedom to choose our actions, relationships, and words is what autonomy is all about. Being deprived of those freedoms is a significant hit to having harmony in our lives.

Fairness

When we feel unfairly treated (or believe someone important to us has been), we are often motivated to right the perceived wrong. Justice, vengeance, and envy are all related to the fairness driver. When any of these feelings creep into our lives, we feel out of harmony.

Well-Being

The well-being driver encompasses health (both in mind and body) and incorporates rest

Security

The comfort in knowing, or at least feeling, that future events won't harm or negatively affect

and fun. We can't be in harmony if we're tired, unhealthy, in pain, or running so fast that we can't catch our breath. Laughter and fun also fall into this bucket. Having a healthy dose of humor and levity in our daily interactions reduces stress and improves our overall sense of well-being.

us drives harmony. Of course, different levels of security exist. At the most basic level, we must feel physically safe from harm and have both shelter and food. Once those basic needs are met, the security driver is influenced by knowing: (1) our job/means of providing for ourselves and those we love is secure; (2) that we are saving enough for our futures and that our possessions and investments are safe; and (3) that our relationships feel strong. Any factor that affects these three areas and makes our lives less predictable will have a negative impact on the security driver.

The Influencers of Harmony

We can't physically touch the feelings behind the personal engagement drivers, but we can influence them. That's where the harmony influencers come into play. Although, it's important to keep in mind again that the definition of "harmony" is fluid, and that our idea of harmony might look and feel different from yours. Because our list of harmony influencers is exhaustive and *any* of the things one does to influence the harmony drivers counts, it's helpful in identifying the ways we can improve harmony in our lives. We break these influencers in our Balance Framework into three categories: Alignment, Living, and Managing:

Alignment Influencers

Alignment of Purpose, Plans, Goals, Time & Energy, and Belief is the first key to personal engagement. Stepping back as individuals and assessing each of these influencers will build a strong foundation upon which to build a harmonious life.

Living Influencers

The Living Influencers – Tools, Routines & Habits, Communication, Learning, Rules, Family & Friends, Money, and Environment – are at our disposal to drive change in our lives. Once our Alignment Influencers are calibrated and in a good place, we can turn to these Living influencers to make more tactical improvements to our day-to-day lives.

Managing Influencers

Lastly, the Managing Influencers – Measurement and Adjustments – helps us stay on track. They allow us to look critically at our level of commitment and whether we're taking the necessary steps to bring our lives into harmony and keep us there.

Using the Tool and Making Harmony Improvements

The table below provides examples of the influencers and how they might affect our individual drivers, either positively or negatively. The creative application of these influencers can result in a

rich set of actions and ideas that will enhance multiple aspects of life.

But how do you use the Personal Engagement Framework to change your life?

First, think through how you feel about each harmony driver. How do you feel about the Growth in your life, your Relationships, your Autonomy, Security, Fairness, and Well-Being? Are they all where they need to be, or is one or more of the drivers currently out of whack? If you find that a driver is not where you'd like it to be, look at the column for that driver and identify its influencers. Then consider implementing some of the tactics noted by those influencers.

For example, if we feel insecure in some aspect of our life, say our finances, we will follow the security column down through each row/influencer to generate ideas on what we can do about it. For example, we would ask ourselves questions like:

How could a plan help here?

What habits or routines could I build to address this problem?

What tools, or software, might help me?

How could communication help, either through expert advice or a conversation with someone else?

What skills could I learn that would help?

This could lead us to put a financial plan in place, establish a new routine or habit like tracking a budget, start using a financial management application, communicate with an expert who can provide advice, or learn a new skill that increases our earning power or our ability to manage our finances in a spreadsheet. Those are just a few examples. Spending time thinking through how we can use each influencer to address our problem can help us generate more, and better, ideas than just trying to brainstorm off the top of our head.

In the end, we believe you'll find that the Personal Engagement Framework is a useful tool for diagnosing where your life – or that of your partner, friend, mentee, etc. – is in disharmony. And once you've identified which harmony drivers need shoring up, you can use the harmony influencers to make adjustments and improvements.

Alignment

		Influence on...					
Influencers	Description/Examples	Growth	Relationships	Autonomy	Security	Fairness	Well-Being
Purpose	Purpose defines our "why" What is my personal passion and purpose? Why do I do what I do? It often takes the form of a personal purpose or mission statement. Knowing, or at least defining, our purpose for the time being can influence all the harmony drivers. It can help us prioritize the importance of each of the drivers at this point in our lives and determine where we might need to make sacrifices to achieve our purpose.	Purpose helps us pare down the infinite number of opportunities available to help us grow and learn. It can also help us recognize progress and celebrate our achievements.	Purpose helps us assess how relationships are benefiting our lives, which relationships are missing, and which relationships are unhelpful.	Purpose helps us gain a sense of autonomy, a feeling that we're writing our own script and acting on our own agency rather than reacting to the world around us.	Purpose helps us understand what we need to feel safe and secure. It can reassure us that we're using our time and talents for the greater good. A purpose that resonates helps us feel more secure in our own skin.	Purpose helps us determine how much the concept of fairness will play into our decisions and our lives.	Purpose helps us prioritize where to spend our time, which helps us manage our pace at a healthy level. It also helps us weigh how important our health and enjoyment are at this particular moment.
Plans	Plans help us create a vision for our future. Without plans, we'll float around like an unmoored boat at the mercy of the tide. Examples include plans for your career, family, finances, and retirement, along with	Plans help us lay out the steps we'll take to grow, learn, and achieve.	Plans can help us maintain the relationships in our lives. Without plans, we might never see the people who are important to us.		Plans help us create a more certain future by providing order and structure to our lives.		Plans allow us space in our lives for fun, exercise, and downtime.

	plans for your day, month, or upcoming year.						
Goals	Goals allow us to measure progress against our plans. They also serve as guideposts for our decision-making.	When defined properly, goals help structure our growth. Without goals, our achievements can lose their meaning.	Goals can help us build new and stronger relationships.	Goals can help us gain more control of our lives, which improves the feeling of autonomy. Goals can also restrict our autonomy, which can also be beneficial – e.g., eating only healthy food.	Goals can provide us with clarity and a sense of security about our future.		Goals can help us improve our health.
Time and Energy	We only have so much bandwidth to give to the world. Our time is the most precious asset we possess, and the energy we bring to the world on any given day is finite. We need to allocate that properly across our efforts to manage each of the harmony drivers.	Managing both our time and our energy is critical to growth.	Without focusing our time and energy in the right places, our lives and relationships will suffer.	Taking the initiative to manage our time and energy itself has a positive influence on our autonomy.	Disciplined management of our time and energy provides us with some certainty about how our day will progress.	Managing our time and energy can help us avoid falling into a victim mentality, in which we feel like the world is treating us unfairly.	Time and energy management have an outsized impact on our well-being. When we are pressed for time or out of energy, stress levels rise and our health and enjoyment of life suffer.
Belief	Belief is about faith and the hope that things can always get better. From wherever we draw that strength – be it religious faith, nature, the universe, or somewhere else – belief, faith, and hope provide us with the motivation to use the influencers to improve our lives.						

Living

Influence on...

Influencers	Description/Examples	Growth	Relationships	Autonomy	Security	Fairness	Well-Being
Tools	Tools are devices that supplement or amplify our physical and mental capabilities.	Tools can enhance our ability to accomplish tasks, which affects the growth driver. Examples include personal technology, hand tools, appliances, gadgets, etc. But technology can also degrade our performance if we find ourselves distracted by or addicted to it (e.g., social media, devices, etc.). However, we may be able to enhance our growth by disengaging from it.	Relationships can be enhanced or degraded with the use of technology (e.g., mobile phones, social media apps, dating apps, cookware for making meals for others, etc.).	Technology can eliminate or speed up tedious tasks. Tedium is a hit to our autonomy because we'd much rather be doing something else. Examples of technology that speed up tasks include drills, leaf blowers, dishwashers, etc.	Technology such as password managers, home security systems, and smoke detectors help us live safer lives. Technology like apps for financial planning and investment management can even help provide financial security.		Technology can help us live healthier lives – think weight loss apps and activity/sleep tracking watches – as well as provide fun diversions like social media cat videos and streaming entertainment at home.
Routines and Habits	Always present, routines and habits are two of the most underutilized influencers of harmony in our personal lives. We can develop routines and habits to enhance every aspect of harmony. Routines are consciously chosen and require some level of discipline to perform. A habit is an 'automatic' process that starts with a cue, triggers a routine, and results in a reward. That reward is the positive feeling you get from one of the engagement drivers. Both good and bad habits follow this process.	Routines and habits can provide time for us to do the things that help us grow, like learning a new skill or getting into flow on a focused task.	Routines and habits can influence relationships. For example, saying "I love you" to your significant other or your kids when they leave for the day, hugging a friend when you see them, or always visiting an ailing parent at a certain time.		A routine or habit can keep us safe and secure, like locking your car doors, testing your smoke detectors monthly, or looking at your calendar every morning so you don't miss a meeting.		Exercise routines or habits are a great way to enhance your overall well-being. Other examples include eating healthy foods and going to bed/getting up at a routine time to ensure you get enough sleep.
Communication	Communication is the process by which information or knowledge is transferred from one person to another via our senses.	Communication in the form of recognition can result in a feeling of accomplishment and growth. Communication in the form of criticism can have the opposite effect.	Communication is critical for developing and maintaining relationships. Poor communication can ruin relationships.	We must communicate our needs to others. When we want or need more autonomy and freedom from the important people in our lives, we need to tell them.	Communication can help to reduce uncertainty, which enhances our sense of security. Reassuring a friend that everything will be okay can provide them with a sense of security.	If something feels unfair, we need to communicate that to the people in our lives who can improve the situation.	Having fun and laughing is an important part of well-being. And humor is a form of communication that can substantially improve our feelings of well-being.
Skills and Practice	We develop new skills by learning or performing a task and then practicing it over time.	Skills and practice build expertise that helps us perform, accomplish, and grow. Speaking in public, playing the guitar, and building a house are all examples of skills that contribute to growth.	New skills in communicating or cooking, for example, can enhance our relationships.	Learning new skills using technology can save time and provide us with the freedom to do things we love, which in turn improves our autonomy.	Practicing new skills such as financial planning or self-defense can help us feel more secure.	New skills can improve fairness in our lives. For example, if someone in our family is resentful that we never learn how to do something that is needed around the house (e.g., cook, do laundry, mow the lawn, etc.), then learning that skill can improve the feelings of fairness in the family.	Learning and practicing new diet and exercise skills can lead to a healthier life.
Rules	Personal rules ("I always do," "I never do") can have a strong effect on our lives. Rules can also lead to disharmony if they are too restrictive or limit autonomy on those around us.	Rules we put in place for ourselves can enhance our growth. For example, 'eating the frog' or getting the most important task done for that day first thing in the morning, can drive a sense of accomplishment and limit procrastination.	Rules like 'never go to sleep angry' or 'every other Saturday is date night' or 'always put your dirty dishes in the dishwasher' can enhance relationships and demonstrate clear expectations as to how others should be treated.	The personal rules we impose on ourselves naturally put limits on our autonomy. But a set of rules that puts limits on our freedom in order to provide balance in the other harmony drivers can help us hit our optimal 'sweet spot' for our own autonomy.	Many of the personal rules we put in place serve to improve our security. 'Never walk alone at night,' 'always lock the doors when you get home,' and 'never leave your purse on the passenger seat when you're not in the car' are three good examples.	Rules can help us create more fairness in the world, e.g., 'never cut in line,' 'don't steal,' 'make a monthly donation to your favorite charity.'	Rules can also help us stay healthy and fit. 'Avoid sweets,' 'drink lots of water,' or 'exercise four days per week' are examples.

Family and Friends	Family and friends are the people in our lives with whom we choose to associate and surround ourselves, and they have a tremendous effect on our lives. Therefore, this is a special form of a rule.	Mentors, teachers, friends, and family can all contribute to our growth by offering ideas and encouragement that helps us accomplish important things. Conversely, the wrong people can influence us in a way that causes a detrimental effect on the harmony in our lives.	An enriching group of family and friends will have a positive effect on all of the relationships in our lives. Consequently, toxic relationships in families can have a detrimental effect on all of our relationships.	The act of choosing who we associate with is an exercise of our autonomy.	Strong relationships with family and friends bring a sense of security and certainty to our lives. Being part of a 'tribe' is important to our overall safety and security. Meanwhile, being shunned by a group of people that you care about can be devastating.	Reciprocity in our friend and family relationships helps to reinforce the strength of those relationships and enhance harmony in our lives.	Being with people we love and enjoy brings a tremendous sense of well-being. It's fun and healthy and makes a tremendous impact on our well-being and, consequently, the harmony in our lives.
Money	How much money we need to live on is also a special rule. We decide the kind of lives we want to live. We also balance our natural skills, the skills we choose to learn, and the levels at which we invest our time and energy in the influencers of the harmony drivers. Based on that balance, some of us will require little or no money while others will strive for high incomes and wealth. Money doesn't by itself drive harmony in our lives (it can actually have disastrous consequences), but how we choose to use money in our lives is what influences the harmony drivers.	An increase in compensation in and of itself is an accomplishment, resulting in positive impacts to the growth driver. Conversely, a demotion or reduction in salary will negatively affect the growth driver.	Money can be spent on others and can improve relationships. Paying for your children to attend private school or buying a gift for a loved one are two examples.	We can use money to pay down debt, which enhances autonomy.	We can save for the future, which enhances security.	Money can help right a wrong, thus increasing the fairness driver. For example, equal pay for equal work.	We can use money to improve our health by spending it on medicine, fitness equipment, club memberships, and diet programs. We can also spend money to have fun, take a vacation, or attend a concert.
Environment	The environment encompasses the space and physical environment in which we live.	Striving to create or acquire better surroundings is a growth driver. Having a larger home or access to pleasant outdoor space can contribute to the growth driver.	The right environment can enhance our relationships. 'Open concept' homes are designed to enhance interaction, which can improve relationships. Similarly, ambiance is a critical factor in determining whether a date or a gathering of friends will successfully encourage deeper relationships.	Our environment can constrain our autonomy and our security. Safety concerns can lead us to stay inside at night if we live in a dangerous neighborhood, for example. This is a good example of harmony drivers influencing one another.			Our environment has a profound impact on our well-being. Spending time in nature can enhance your mood and feelings of well-being, while being stuck in traffic or listening to your neighbor's leaf blower all afternoon can negatively affect it.

Managing

		Influence on...					
Influencers	Description/Examples	Growth	Relationships	Autonomy	Security	Fairness	Well-Being
Measurement	Measurement allows us to assess how we are doing in terms of meeting our goals. Think of this as our bathroom scale: it gives us an objective view of our progress.	Achieving goals, or metrics, can motivate our growth. If those measures are unrealistic or unachievable, the growth driver can dip before anything is accomplished.	If you're working with others (family, friends, or colleagues) to meet goals, then the relationships driver may be positive. If the measures create unhealthy competition, however, the relationship driver could take a hit.	Too many measures can decrease the feeling of autonomy, as it may feel as if we're being told what to do and how to do it.	Measures provide clarity and set expectations for the future. We are more comfortable – and feel secure – if we know what to expect on a daily basis and in the future. Ongoing measurements keep our expectations in check.	Measurements against savings goals can affect our feelings of financial security.	Measurements against our eating, exercise, sleep, or even social targets how well we are meeting our goal to stay healthy.
Adjustments	As we track our measurements against our targets in each of the harmony drivers, we can drive more harmony in our lives by modifying our actions and make adjustments to the influencers.						

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