

## Virtue is found in moderation



**“He destroyed his inner balance! ...  
Get the yoga coach!”**

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*In medio stat virtus* (Latin)

Most virtues taken to an extreme can become a vice. For a particular virtue to be beneficial, it needs to be balanced by a different virtue. The Stoic philosophers had a term for this—anacoluthia—the mutual entailment of the virtues; no virtue is a virtue by itself.

For instance, notice how each of these virtues, if not balanced by another virtue, can be unproductive, but when paired together they create balance.

- *Confidence* without *humility* can lead to egotism and unhealthy self-reliance. *Humility* without *confidence* can make you timid.
- *Courage* without *caution* can lead to recklessness. Unbalanced, *caution* can lead to passivity.
- *Frugality* without *generosity* can lead to excessive thriftiness and stinginess. *Generosity* without *frugality* can lead you to the poor house.
- *Openness* can lead to healthy transparency and aid to developing relationships; but it needs to be balanced by *discretion*.
- *Self-control* has its advantages but without some *spontaneity* you may live a stiff and dull life.

Any strength, out of balance, can become a weakness. For instance, I am fanatical about being on time.

Granted, punctuality is a virtue, but my zeal for being on time can consume too much of my attention and may cause me to miss other, equally important issues.

Philosopher Gregory Bateson expands this thought to include other elements: "There is always an optimal value, beyond which anything is toxic, no matter what: oxygen, sleep, psychotherapy, philosophy."

Analyze yourself. What are your core strengths? What is the potential downside of each strength? What virtue would balance each of your core strengths?

So the key is balance; moderation. Extremism and fanaticism excludes alternative ideas or activities and lead to imbalance, intolerance, and narrow-mindedness.