

The Quest for Balance Game

How to Play:

Follow the path to achieving a more balanced life! To start, flip a coin. Heads means you move forward one space; tails means you move forward two spaces. Keep going and watch out for obstacles along the way!

START



Study hard for a science test and get an A.

Move forward two spaces.



Play soccer for an hour with a friend after school. Exercise helps you stay fit and is good for your health.

Move forward three spaces.



Watch TV instead of doing your homework. Now you don't have time to see your cousins this weekend.

Go back one space.



You're having a hard time balancing everything you have on your plate. Instead of handling it alone, you ask your parents or a teacher for help.

Move forward two spaces.



It's Friday, and a friend invites you over to her house. While you're watching a movie, she offers you an alcoholic drink. You say: "NO! That's not my style."

Move forward three spaces.

Meet Aly Raisman

Ask, Listen, Learn superstar encourages kids to say "YES" to a healthy lifestyle and "NO" to underage drinking

Olympic athlete—and two-time gold medalist—Aly Raisman was just 2 years old when she first discovered her passion for gymnastics. The person she has to thank for introducing her to the sport that would become her career? Her mom. "My mom was a high school gymnast and was always a huge fan of the sport," Aly says. "She wanted me to give it a try, and I loved it right from the start."

After declaring her interest and goal to become a gymnast, Aly got to work training and teaching herself everything she needed to know about the sport. "I would beg my coaches to stay late after practice ended and keep training," she remembers. "I always wanted to learn new skills."

To stay at the top of her game, Aly trained twice a day from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and then again from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. She did her schoolwork online in between. "The commitment level was hard to balance, but I found a way to manage," Aly says. "My best advice is to never procrastinate and to always put 100% into everything you do. That way you know you tried your best no matter the outcome."

When I found out that I was going to the Olympics, I cried like a baby."

A Support System

Aly also relied on help from her family during extra-busy days. "My family has always been really supportive, which was so important to me because I could go to them for anything," she says. "No matter what place I finished when competing, they were always proud of me."

At the age of 18, Aly's hard work and dedication helped her realize her dream: joining Team USA to compete in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.



"When I found out that I was going to the Olympics, I cried like a baby," she laughs. "I was so emotional and so happy. It was such a special moment."

Before she knew it, Aly was on a plane to London—with her parents and three younger siblings by her side. She earned two gold medals and a bronze during the competition, and Aly is the first to admit: The moment when she was awarded her first gold medal was surreal.

"It is amazing to think about how much hard work and dedication I put into the sport over the years," Aly says. "I know if I drink alcohol underage I would not be where I am today. My family was there every step of the way, which is why it was so special to have them in the stands in London cheering me on."

Life After London

Since returning from London, Aly has started working with the *Ask, Listen, Learn: Kids and Alcohol Don't Mix* program. "It's really cool to know I'm playing a part in encouraging kids to say YES to a healthy lifestyle and NO to underage drinking through a national campaign." Aly couldn't be more proud of everything she has accomplished. But any credit for her success, she says, goes to her family. "There's something so calming about knowing that no matter what happens, your family will love you," Aly explains. "I think if my parents had put pressure on me, I wouldn't have been able to survive in the gymnastics world. They made it so I could do gymnastics for myself, not for anyone else." ■

Life at the Gym

What do you love most about being a gymnast? I love how challenging it is. It is never boring.

How much time did you spend every week training for the Olympics? I spent about 35 hours per week training.

Who is your biggest fan? My family and coaches are my biggest fans.

Do you have a ritual you follow for good luck before a competition begins? I like to take my time doing my hair and makeup, and listen to upbeat music.

What was the best part about competing in the London Games? Representing Team USA was the best. And getting to spend so much time with all of my teammates!

Who was the most memorable person you met at the London Games? Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge! She was so sweet and friendly. It was an honor to meet her.

Who's your role model? My role model is the '96 Olympic Gymnastics team. It won the team gold medal for the first time in history!

What were you thinking when you won your first gold medal? I was thinking about all the hours and hard work that I put into the training and how [our team] did it. We all were Olympic champions!

FINISH



Congratulations!

Leading a healthy, balanced life isn't always easy, but small changes can make a big difference.



Your friend tells you he wants to drink some of his parents' alcohol. You tell him that it's not your thing and you won't be a part of his plans.

Move ahead one space.



Listen to your favorite song on the radio, and feel totally relaxed.

Move forward one space.



Your friend is having a party, but after a busy week, you decide to stay home. You have a new book to read, and just need some time for you.

Move forward one space.



Drink a soda close to bedtime, and the caffeine makes it hard for you to sleep so you feel tired the next day.

Go back one space.



You're cast as the lead in the school play. Create a calendar to keep track of everything you have to get done.

Move forward two spaces.



You scheduled too much today! How will you find the time for homework, practice, and helping your neighbor?

Move back one space.



Sam presents his prizewinning project at the Siemens Competition.

The Superstar Next Door

Sam Pritt: Teenage Software Celebrity

Seventeen-year-old Sam Pritt's after-school schedule includes playing soccer, practicing the piano, and developing software to aid the U.S. government. While looking for a project one summer Sam's focus turned toward the problem of geolocation in the military. Last year the inquisitive teen developed a computer algorithm that analyzes the horizon line in almost any picture and compares it against elevation data to pinpoint exactly where the image was taken. And so far it's really paid off.

The Benefits of Balance

After winning the \$3,000 first prize in a regional round of the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, Sam went on to place third (and score a \$40,000 scholarship) in the national finals. Sam's project soon drew the attention of an engineer at Lockheed Martin, who asked to use Sam's software to help FEMA determine damage to areas hit by Hurricane Sandy.

Sam understands how important it is to have diverse interests and not be distracted by peer pressure or negative influences. Though he is now working on expanding his software to recognize shorelines and cities, Sam still finds time to enjoy his hobbies. "It's important for kids to have a lot of varied interests," Sam says. "My life would be a lot different if I hadn't gotten out there and tried so many things." ■

Underage Drinking: The Ultimate Balance Buster

All of you want to have the best possible lives that you can. Some of you want to be soccer stars, to do well in school, to have lots of friends, or to get along better with your parents.

But balancing all of the different aspects of your life is not always so easy. Sometimes you'll feel on top of things, but sometimes you'll feel completely overwhelmed. Anyone who says a kid's life is easy doesn't know what he or she is talking about.

To best manage your own life you need to be at the top of your game. Remember that consuming alcohol always interferes with body and brain functions. You don't perform better. You perform worse. Drinking gets in the way of a healthy, balanced life—and it can make achieving your dreams impossible.

Sometimes your friends might pressure you to do things you know are wrong—like drinking alcohol. Succumbing to this type of peer pressure won't make life better for you—it will make things worse, a lot worse. So always remember to say "YES" to your goals and a healthy lifestyle and "NO" to underage drinking.

Anthony E. Wolf, Ph.D., is a practicing clinical psychologist who has worked with children and adolescents for more than 30 years and lectures frequently on parenting topics.