

Over the Holidays, my sons and daughter came over to the house for dinner. As usual we ended up on the porch; laughing and talking about the good old days when they were young children and I was a hard working and thoroughly baffled parent. As we reminisced into the wee hours, they began to share stories about the “joys” of sibling rivalry. The pranks, arguments and competition all seemed to be hilarious now. But, back then... it was serious business.

There was a delicate balance of power at stake, often manifesting itself in heated arguments over the fate of the last remaining piece of pizza. There was never any room for grey area in these confrontations... it was either “mine or yours”. When I would offer up a clever compromise they would instead chose to loudly repeat their arguments, over and over. This would continue until I was forced to angrily administer “the Frustrated Solomon”, a form of justice that consisted of me frantically stuffing all the remaining pizza into my mouth. Although I found some satisfaction in this, pointing at the two boys, raising both arms triumphantly into the air and proudly proclaiming “Mmphff”, 40 pounds and 20 years later, I have had to forgo this particular approach to judicial problem solving. My friends don’t seem to appreciate me eating all their chicken wings while they are involved in a debate and my wife won’t buy me blue jeans bigger than a “36”.

In fairness to my kids, duality seems to be part of the architecture of our Universe. There are endless examples of this interesting binary nature in our lives. Left-right, up-down, front-back, hot-cold, good-evil, black-white, big-little, male-female, empty-full, Gators-Seminoles... just to name a few.

Maybe it’s simply easier for us to think of things in these terms; because most everything is really a lot more complicated. If we really think about something, very deserving shades of grey will permeate even the simplest subjects.

That’s where we ended up on Christmas Eve; talking about balance. Well, kind of. We were actually discussing “Teeter – Totters” and how everything was great when both kids stayed on board, cooperating. Even if one of you was much bigger you could still balance. But if someone unexpectedly jumped off, his or her surprised partner on the opposite side would go crashing helplessly into the ground.

Even though we had some laughs over this, we all came to the same conclusion. There is no winner when things end up in such catastrophic imbalance. Neither the sneaky quitter that took the easy way out (YEAH, I’M TALKING ABOUT YOU, MIKE!) or the person sitting alone on the ground with a sore butt wins. On or off, up or down wasn’t the goal... achieving balance in the middle was the goal.

I know this is contrary to the winner take all mentality, but I like to think that in most cases, truth and the common good can be found somewhere in the middle... in balance.