Finding Balance in Work and Life

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Work-Life Balance

♦ Broad concept closely related to job satisfaction.

♦ Proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other.

♦ Large individual component – Definitely not an “equal distribution” – Not a one size fits all solution. – Meaning, each individual's needs, experiences, and goals, define the balance.
Work-Life Balance

We take life so seriously that there is nothing to fill our leisure hours during our working years, and when retirement comes we have nothing to enjoy.

CH Mayo, 1935
Engrossed late and soon in professional cares... you may so lay waste your powers that you may find, too late, with hearts given away, that there is no place in your habit-stricken souls for those gentler influences which make your life worth living.

Sir William Osler
Difficulty balancing personal and professional lives is a major contributor to physician distress

Work-Life Balance: New Challenges

- Insurance and referral forms
- Rapidly expanding body of medical knowledge
- Credentialing requirements
- EMRs-15% more time
- Shrinking of life. Web-based care.
  Reimbursement for email based care.
Work-Life Balance

- A large number of physicians now choose a specialty based on how well it fits with their personal life rather than on how well it aligns with their professional interests or the needs of society.

Stress and the Practice of Medicine

- One third of physicians experience burnout at any given point in time
- Manifestations of physician distress include anxiety, burnout, depression, fatigue, and broken or strained relationships
- Burnout and distress may have adverse effects on quality of care, patient satisfaction and compliance, and the frequency of medical errors and malpractice claims

Workplace Stress and Burnout

• Employee stress is recognized as a major drain on corporate productivity and competitiveness.
  • $300 billion, $7,500 per employee, is spent annually in the U. S. on stress related compensation claims, reduced productivity, absenteeism, health insurance cost, direct medical expenses, and employee turnover.

• Job burnout experienced by 25% to 40% of workers in the US.

• Anxiety/depression is the leading occupational disease of the 21st Century, responsible for more days lost than any other single factor.
Provider Burnout

- 49% of female physicians reported high stress levels
- 44% of female physicians felt mentally tired
- 17% of female physicians took antidepressants

Provider Burnout

- Internal Medicine Journal 2005 35(5):272-278
  28% experienced high levels of two or three aspects of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, low personal accomplishment).

  19% had a high score for emotional exhaustion, 22% had a high score for depersonalization/cynicism and 16% had a low score for professional accomplishment; 32% had a high score on either the emotional exhaustion or the depersonalization/cynicism scale (moderate degree of burnout) and 4% had scores in the range of burnout in all three scales (high degree of burnout)
Work-Life Balance

Common Stressors in Medical Care

- Frequently work nights, weekends, and holidays
- Often must be available by pager
- Too much contact with patients. Lack of time outs
- Inherent uncertainty involved in patient care
- Dealing with life and death
- Limited access to social-professional support systems
- Limited time and place to share personal feelings with colleagues
- Inadequate training for “dealing with” people
- Feeling indespensible
- Drudgery-repetitive single tasks
- High earnings
- Chronic fatigue
MENTAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Distressed, worried, upset, tearful, deflated, feelings of helplessness & hopelessness, unable to cope, anxious, depressed
- Impatient, easily irritated, angry, hostile, aggressive
- Frustrated, bored, inadequate, guilty, neglected, insecure, vulnerable
- Loss of interest in appearance, health, diet, sex, low self-esteem
- Polyphasic (too many things at once), rushed
- Failing to finish tasks
- Difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating, making decisions, forgetful, lack of creativity, irrational, procrastinating
- Hypercritical, inflexible, unreasonable, over-reactive, non-productive
Compassion fatigue

- A state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it is traumatizing for the helper.
- The helper, in contrast to the person(s) being helped, is traumatized or suffers through the helper's own efforts to empathize and be compassionate. Often, this leads to poor self care and extreme self sacrifice in the process of helping.

Figley, C. Medscape 2005
What Is Stress?

- Process through which some stimulus or change can result in long-term debilitation.
- Involves *arousal response*. AKA “fight or flight”
- The arousal response attempts to return organism to equilibrium.
Stress is largely related to perceived threat.

Perceived demand
- Perceived resources
= Perceived threat
Stress Cycle

Stressor
- Event
- Person
- Condition

Perception
- Appraisal of Threat

Response

Positive Coping
- Decreased Stress
- Well-Being

Negative Coping
- Increased Stress
- Burnout

Temporary Relief
Do clinicians have a different personality?

Resilience

- Control
- Competency
- Challenge
Boredom: the desire for desires.

Leo Tolstoy
Yerkes-Dodson Law: Arousal Performance Curve

Zone of maximum performance

“Unmotivated”

“Stress impaired”
Balancing a Full Platter

Balance is experienced differently by everyone and can be identified by some or all of the following:

- Having time for life and work
- Enjoying your family and social situations
- Experiencing leisure
- Peace of mind
- Opportunity to grow
- Finding satisfaction and sense of purpose in your work
Importance of Sense of Purpose in Life

Finding what you love to do the most, living with passion
About being in tune with who you really are and living a life of meaning.
Almost like a spiritual experience.
Finding Purpose and Meaning in Work and Life

For physicians, helping and being of service to others has particular meaning and leads to a high level of personal satisfaction. Meaningful work is characterized by a sense that the best within you is called upon each day.
Finding Purpose and Meaning in Work and Life

- Set aside four hours of uninterrupted time to reflect
- Identify your five most important priorities.
- Rate how satisfying you find each priority.
- Identify why these are satisfying. Why are they meaningful or important to you
- Commit to spending more time with each priority
Time Management

♦ Set boundaries between work and home
  – Make your preferences clear
  – Do not make your activities fit your time
  – Negotiate product. Do not evaluate your self on amount of time at work

♦ Decide whether you are effective at time management
  – Reread *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by S. Covey
    • Beginning with the end in mind
    • Sharpening the stone
    • Prioritizing demands
URGENCY

HIGH

1. Urgent and important
   - Do it now

2. Important, not urgent
   - Decide when to do it

LOW

3. Not important, not urgent
   - Dump it

4. Urgent, not important
   - Delegate it
Organizational policies

- The mission and policies of health care organizations may relate to physician satisfaction.
  
  - Opportunities for Professional Development
  - Challenges Commensurate with Skills, Interests, and Resources
  - A Culture that Values and Encourages Life Outside of Work
  - A Culture that Cultivates Professionalism and Professional Satisfaction
Integrating work and home

- Talk to your children about why you do what you do
- Bring them to work as soon as you can and in developmentally appropriate ways
- Avoid talking about the *wrong* things.
The Medical Marriage

- One physician couple traditional
- One physician couple non traditional
- The two physician couple
- The retiring physician
Stress Management:
Think Differently

• Awareness is the key to managing stress
• Everyone has their own unique:
  -- Responses to stress
  -- Potential stressors
  -- Thoughts and subsequent feelings associated with those stressors
  -- Symptoms that follow

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.  

Leo Tolstoy
Stress Management

The Here and Now

The Top Stress Reducer

• Stop feeling guilty about the past!
• Stop worrying about the future
• Live life in the *Present*

If you want to be happy, be.

*Leo Tolstoy*
Stress Management: Mind-Body Techniques

Primary goal: elicitation of a psychophysiological state of hypoarousal or relaxation.

Relaxation

Generally shifts the sympathetic toward the parasympathetic

- Heart rate, blood pressure generally decrease
- Vaso-constriction to vaso-dilation
- Mechanisms appear mediated in part by shift to NO production(1)

Mind-Body Techniques

Hypnosis
- Natural state of aroused, attentive focal concentration coupled with a relative suspension of peripheral awareness

Biofeedback
- Devices that amplify physiological processes (eg, blood pressure, muscle activity) that are ordinarily difficult to perceive – electromyographic biofeedback, temperature biofeedback

Astin, Shapiro, Eisenberg, Mind-Body Medicine: State of the Science, Implications for Practice
JABFP 2002
Mind-Body Techniques

Guided imagery
- Generation of mental images – evoke a psychophysiological state of relaxation

Meditation
- Intentional self-regulation of attention. Systematic mental focus on particular aspects of inner thoughts.

Two most extensively researched: transcendental meditation, mindfulness meditation

Astin, Shapiro, Eisenberg, Mind-Body Medicine: State of the Science, Implications for Practice
JABFP 2002
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical condition</th>
<th>Evidence level</th>
<th>Evidence Source</th>
<th>Practice Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After myocardial infarction</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Two positive meta-analyses (12,879)</td>
<td>Self-regulation skills, such as relaxation and the management of anger, hostility and general stress reactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer symptoms (disease and treatment related)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Two positive meta-analyses (~6,166)</td>
<td>Adjunctive therapy – efficacy in improving mood, quality of life, and coping with both the disease and treatment-related side effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical outcomes</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Two positive meta-analyses (~6,904)</td>
<td>Presurgical preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Headache                           | Strong         | Two positive meta-analyses (~3,083)         | Relaxation, thermal biofeedback
- recurrent migraine – relaxation or muscle biofeedback, adjunctive or standalone
- tension headache                 |
| Hypertension                       | Moderate       | Positive results from 1 meta-analysis (1,651) - - contradictory findings in 2 others | Multi-component – useful adjuncts in the medical management of hypertension            |
Mindfulness Practice

♦ Characteristics
  – Active observation of oneself
  – Increased peripheral vision
  – Presence-Being in the here and now
  – Critical curiosity
  – Courage to see the world as it is rather than as one perceives it to be
    • Adoption of a beginner’s mind – continuing to see things as new
  – Humility to tolerate one’s areas of incompetence
  – Compassion based on insight
Meditation Practice - Instructions

- Sit comfortably
- Pay attention to being centered
- Eyes half closed or open – gently focus on object about 6 feet away
- Mouth slightly open
- Begin awareness of out breath (exhaling)
- Note precise beginning of out breath, stay with it as if riding the outgoing tide.
- Note gap at end of out breath just before inhaling
- Let in-breath happen naturally – abdominal breathing – note the tummy rising
- Repeat out breath practice
- Any time practicing is worthwhile
Meditation Practice (cont)

- Thoughts will arise
- When a thought is noted (you are distracted from your attention on the out breath) label the thought “thinking” and return to your out breath
- Do not judge – there is no right or wrong way to practice
- Accept the impermanent nature of thought
- Come back to the out breath
- Be gentle with yourself
- Check you posture occasionally – sit upright
- Come back to the out breath
- Abide in peace
Prayer

Pick a focus word or short phrase that's firmly rooted in your belief system.

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes.
- Relax your muscles.
- Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, repeat your focus word, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself as you exhale.
- Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh, well," and gently return to the repetition.
- Continue for ten to twenty minutes.
- Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.
- Practice this technique once or twice daily.
References on Mind-Body Techniques

References


Positive Self-Talk

• I am calm and relaxed
• I feel peaceful and centered
• My breathing is deep and regular
• I have control over how I react to stressful situations in my life
• I am worthy and deserving of happiness