

Wellness and Resilience

Objective: *Develop a plan to improve or maintain our current level of resident wellness in the face of our evolving curriculum.*

Background: *Medical residencies are a challenging phase in the training of physicians. Developing well-balanced emergency physicians has long been a primary goal for our residency. There are many different pursuits in life that contribute to an individual's "wellness", and priorities vary from person to person. Some would include raising a family, fitness, volunteer or outreach work, music, advocacy, etc. It is important for residents and faculty to identify what is important for keeping themselves well and creating a plan to ensure they can include these things in their life.*

Idea Generation:

Plan for Progress:
(include task leaders, objectives and timeline)

Twenty Tips and Tricks for Work Life Balance

Compiled by Stacy Reynolds, MD and Stacey Poznanski, DO

1. **Determine your personal values and schedule time for them.** Give yourself permission to enjoy these personal promises as you do your career promises. This includes exercise, adequate sleep, developing personal hobbies, reading something nonmedical, and time with your support network. Organization drives your best projects at work. Let this skill set boost your life productivity as well.
2. **Find your time wasters.** Always looking for your keys? Does your washing machine snack on all your matching socks? Fix these ten-minute delays and carve out fifty minutes for an art class or yoga.
3. **Build healthy habits into your work life.** Take the stairs. Park a longer distance from the office or hospital. Move a meeting out of the office and take a campus stroll instead.
4. **Know the difference between necessities and luxuries.** Certain projects may open doors and are important for advancement of your career or family. Others may be exciting to complete, but take considerable time and effort without the added benefits. Do a risk-benefit ratio before accepting every project that comes your way, so that luxury projects don't take away from life necessities, like exercise and time with your family and friends.
5. **Double Dip.** With every project, find a second goal it could satisfy. For example, if you're asked to create a lecture, turn it into a book chapter. You've already done the research, so make it really count. Can't seem to find enough time to do the things you love and still see your loved ones? Combine the two! Do a yoga class with your best friend or sister. Take a cooking class with your significant other as part of date night. Join a book club with your mother or father. You'll spend quality time together while keeping up those personal values.
6. **Utilize all available time.** Make lunches for tomorrow while dinner simmers on the stove. Listen to audio CME while walking the dog. Have a list of phone calls you can quickly make during the ten minutes between meetings.
7. **Finish what you started at home.** Dirty dishes, piles of laundry, and half-painted rooms augment your anxiety. Schedule 30 minutes each day to tackle these tasks.
8. **Cook less, eat healthy more.** Healthy meals can take twenty minutes or less. Check out quick and easy cookbooks. Consider making double portions and enjoying leftovers, or use football Sundays to prepare a crock-pot full of great food for the next few days. Consult your local culinary school for pre-made meals, prepped ingredients with assembly at home, or even budding chefs that provide in-home catering.
9. **Consider joining a co-op for fresh fruit and veggies.** Not only will you support local farmers, you get your produce delivered to home.
10. **Limit shopping trips.** Keep an ongoing list to record shopping needs as they occur. Buy certain staples like garbage bags, cleaning and paper products and detergents in bulk once a year. You can even buy your groceries online for a small delivery fee when time is tight.

11. **Hire a babysitter before you need one.** Schedule a time weekly or bimonthly. The sitter will appreciate the steady work, and opportunities to build your marriage and maintain your support network will naturally fill the space. Efficient errands, uninterrupted holiday shopping and early dinner and conversation with your spouse flow nicely from this plan.
12. **Set homework deadlines.** You don't have time to struggle with unfinished assignments at 11 o'clock at night. You not a selfish mother for saying "no" to behavior that disrupts the family.
13. **Delegate household tasks when possible.** Negotiate with your cleaning or lawn service providers to meet your specific needs. For example, ask your cleaning staff do basic cleaning on even weeks and focus time on blinds, windows, grouting, bedding changes or closet clean up on odd weeks. Know what you need and work out a deal. If you don't have either of these services, consider getting them, and use this extra time to focus on those personal values mentioned above.
14. **Keep your consultants on speed-dial.** Identify a trusted plumber, handyman, electrician, travel agent or airline, babysitter, etc. before you need them. Keep these numbers accessible to limit stress when the unexpected occurs.
15. **Prepare for equipment failures.** As emergency physicians, we always have a backup plan. If the laryngoscope malfunctions, we don't miss a beat. Have the same mentality at home. Get yearly service on all major appliances and heating/cooling systems in your home. Get replacement quotes for older equipment and keep these handy. If the air conditioning unit from 1994 quits two days before a major deadline, you'll be ready.
16. **Make friends with stay-at-home moms or dads in your neighborhood.** They have often done neighborhood research you won't have time to replicate, such as where to get the best deals, how to throw a great birthday party, and what businesses provide childcare. Appreciate their skill set. You're not as different as you think.
17. **Know where your important documents live.** Create a filing system that works for you and stick to it. This will help avoid wasted time plowing through piles of undifferentiated paperwork looking for that needed piece of paper to complete your current project.
18. **Establish a mentor network.** We can all use guidance by those who have been there and done that, both at work and at home. Parenting requires mentorship too! Have a support network of people who can help you in various stages of parenting, puppy training, or other life events.
19. **Schedule time to plan.** An hour each week or even 10 minutes at the end of each workday create opportunities to plan.
20. **Schedule time to reflect.** Each individual's recipe for personal and professional balance develops with time and experience. Allow time to process these experiences and foster growth in your personal values and definitions of happiness.

Life as a Balance Beam: Practical Ideas for Balancing Work and Home

Michelle B. Riba, M.D., Alissa Riba, Esq., Erica Riba

I recently attended a physician leadership conference where the messages were dominated by such themes as “have fun,” “stop and smell the roses,” “get regular exercise and eat healthy,” “stay focused,” and “collaborate and get out of your silo.” We were asked to turn off our cell phones and pagers, so at every break there was a mad dash for the phone. For half the day, I was worried about how many e-mails, patient call backups, and refills I would be facing at the end. For the other half, I was thinking about how I could pick up dinner that would not be grossly unhealthy, whether I missed a deadline on a letter a colleague needed for promotion, and if my daughter drove home safely from school.

Does any of this sound familiar? It seems that many of us are multitasking and not exactly feeling focused, balanced, refreshed, or in control. For years, a colleague and I have organized a workshop at the American Psychiatric Association’s annual meeting on “Children of Psychiatrists” because we found ourselves wondering about the potential damage that we were doing to our children because of our careers in academic psychiatry. At the workshop, we are continually amazed by the honesty and forthrightness of our speakers and attendees in reflecting on how to balance the range of relationships, duties, and responsibilities we all regularly encounter.

Though I believe the presenters at the leadership conference were genuine in their admonitions and their goals were laudable, how do we manage and balance our own various roles and responsibilities? How do we provide excellent patient care, manage to stay up-to-date with our journals and readings, stay on track for promotion, and continue to learn and grow after we reach our mid- or late careers, while exercising and eating healthy and not burning

out? How do we nourish our relationships and help our children develop and mature into happy and strong individuals while also traveling, attending committee and dinner meetings, and writing grants? The list of questions is long, and I frankly do not know the answers. Like many things in life, when I get stuck, I ask my two daughters, Alissa, 29, and Erica, 17, who kindly provided some comments and perspectives on the idea of balance (Appendix 1).

Balancing work, family, and personal life takes a lot of effort—it is not easy. It is a very personal subject, but all of us are seeking the same things—to try to find a way to juggle the multiple demands placed on us while at the same time enjoying life, not getting burned out, and doing a good job. Making the problem even more complex, we all go through different stages in life. Even if we are “balanced” during one phase, we might not remain so for the next. A nanny or babysitter we had for 1 year (or 1 month) decides to go back to school or calls in sick, and this sets us in a tailspin. Since we all have different families and different levels of responsibilities at work and at home, it is impossible to generalize. I do think, though, that there are ways to learn from one another, so I will offer some suggestions that may be helpful and things that have worked for me over the years.

Practical Ideas

1. **Make friends with different jobs.** It is very important to have friends who can serve as a backup for child care if needed. Just before school starts in September, school emergency contact cards arrive in the school packet, and parents have to name at least two adults, other than a spouse or significant other, who can be counted on to pick up the children in an emergency. It is a good idea to cultivate friends who have different types of jobs/schedules, so that you can complement one another.
2. **Join professional organizations.** Doing so affords potential ways to meet colleagues who can help advance

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your career, provide friendship, and collaborate with you to submit abstracts and posters and present at meetings. For example, the Association for Academic Psychiatry (AAP) is a wonderful organization where it is easy to get to know colleagues from throughout the United States and Canada; be involved in task forces, projects, and presentations at the yearly national meeting; and make friends. It is also very family-friendly, so my children often accompanied me over the years to the meetings.

3. **“I cain’t say no.”** Do not say yes to every professional offer that comes your way—whether it be for work, writing, or committees. We all like compliments and it is very flattering to be asked. There are not enough hours in the day, so if you say yes to one thing, you are really saying no to another. All of us worry that if we say no to an offer to review an article or join a committee, we will never be asked again. Though this may be true occasionally, if you give a reason for why you need to decline and say you would try to make yourself available next time, most people will be understanding and will ask again. One of my friends tells me to call her every time I am about to say yes to any writing project, since this is my big nemesis. A chapter, which really offers little academic value to the curriculum vitae, can take weeks of my life and has made many a summer very miserable.
4. **Find a mentor.** If you are trying to move up the academic ladder, find a mentor—whether at your own university or elsewhere—to whom you can send your curriculum vitae and get feedback regarding holes that need to be filled. For example, it might feel as though you are working very hard at presentations and talks, but there are a lot of openings in your curriculum vitae under the peer-reviewed column.
5. **Limit work in off-work hours.** Minimize the evening dinner/recruitment meetings, early breakfasts, receptions, and time away from the family. There are so many pulls on us to give more and more of our time, which is not reimbursable and does not really show up on the balance sheet. We all have to do some of this to be good academic citizens, but sometimes it can be a real imposition. Think about how often you want to do something in the evening for work and whether some of this activity can be limited. Sometimes hosting a dinner at your home (catered, of course) instead of at a restaurant might be just as easy, and you can include your family in the fun.
6. **Reward good work.** It is good to ask colleagues out to lunch or for a drink, to acknowledge excellent staff with gift certificates, or to send e-mails for jobs well done (with copies to higher level folks). Showing appreciation makes you feel better and helps others perform at their best.
7. **Exercise.** It is a key element to keep us healthy, relieving stress and setting an example for children. It is also important for psychiatrists to help our patients with modifiable health risk factors, so understanding how hard it is to regularize exercise is good for understanding patient adherence and behaviors.
8. **Find what works for you.** I rarely went out on Saturday nights when my children were young. I felt that as a working mom I should not be away from them if I did not absolutely need to. I also did not want to have to worry about organizing any more babysitting than required. In retrospect, this approach worked. I enjoyed the weekends with my children and my husband, who is a busy cardiologist. Other friends have felt that it is important to go on dates with their significant others, and I think this should definitely be considered. You have to figure out what works for you and your family. I do think that balance does not naturally emerge—you have to think about it and make it work.
9. **Don’t be afraid of technology.** I attended a business school function where all of us received mini iPods. Most of us did not know how to use them—we were advised to ask our children. I have to say that it has been one of the most delightful experiences—having my own music and being able to listen to it wherever I go. I think a lot of us are technophobic (or less adroit than we would like to admit) and are afraid that new gadgets will make life even more frustrating. Some of these devices are actually a lot of fun and worth trying, especially if you try to make them playful.
10. **Do what you can—within reason.** I regret missing some of my girls’ dance recitals, plays, and sporting events. I have done some wild plane trips just to get back for a few hours to see as many events as I could, but I was not always able to do so. I think that families do well when everyone tries very hard and everyone realizes no one is perfect. It is impossible to do all that we do for patients, for ourselves, for our families, for our friends, so we just have to keep at it.
11. **Eat well with less mess?** One of the tasks I have not yet mastered is how to get good, healthy meals on the dinner table with minimal cleanup and fuss while avoiding fast food, yet making everyone feel satisfied. Everyone in my family likes different things, so dinners

can be quite chaotic and messy. I know that some people swear by crockpots, freezers, or prepared foods. Maybe we should do a workshop at our next professional meeting on ways to succeed at dinner?

In sum, I appreciate the great honor and privilege to share some of our family's ways (and lack thereof) of "balancing." This list is always changing, so maybe there will be new ones next time!

APPENDIX 1. Daughters' Perspectives

Alissa Riba (age 29)

I don't know how my mom manages. On a daily basis she seems to make everything run smoothly. I think there's a lot of things that go into the mix of making it work—it's those long lists she leaves with the things that need to get done and the numbers to call when they don't; it's the constant reminders and daily check-ins of my normal day and it's definitely her perspective on people and the things that really matter in life.

When I was in college, I remember receiving a poor grade on a paper. My mom's response was something like, "Well, a lot worse could have happened today. It's just a grade, and in the grand scheme of things, it is not a big deal. Go have a good rest of your day and don't get yourself too worked up over it." To be honest, that's not the response you want when you're feeling sorry for yourself. You want someone to commiserate with you and feel sorry for you too.

Later on that day, when I was feeling better and asked her how her day was going, she told me that on that day she had just seen a patient who had metastatic cancer with a poor prognosis. The patient also had a small child who at the time was waiting in the sitting room while my mom was with the patient. Just the idea of that had an effect on me. I have no idea what my grade on the paper was or even what the paper was about. I do remember that story of the patient and thinking that my mother was right and that the day for me could have been a lot worse.

My mom has patients all the time as well as colleagues who depend on her. She has meetings and trips, and she even has a social life. Even with all of these working-mom responsibilities, she makes me feel like I'm a priority.

I think that working moms in general have a lot of responsibilities, and at times it seems impossible to find balance—but it's the little things, the words of comfort and advice and the acknowledgement that she will always be there. She supports me regardless of what that particular day might bring.

Erica Riba (age 17)

Balancing work and family is hard. My mom is a pro at it. I often get asked what it's like being a daughter of a psychiatrist. I say, without hesitation, "It's great!" Every afternoon when I get home, my mom calls me with so many questions. I sometimes think it's too much, but at the end of the day, I really understand why she does it. Sure, she tries to figure out by my tone of voice what is wrong. When she gets home, one awkward facial expression pops up and she tries to figure out what I have been trying to keep from her. But it is so great to know someone cares about your feelings or what went on during your day.

My mom can be swamped all day with patients, meetings, lectures, and conference calls, but when she gets home, it is family time (until the conference calls start again in the evening!). She seems to always have everything under control, and that's what balance means to me.

I will never forget in 10th grade when I felt really sick during school. I knew I had to go home. I called my mom and she immediately dropped everything she was doing to pick me up and bring me home. I always had a babysitter and my mom traveled a lot, so this was tough. I knew, though, that even with all that hard work she was doing, she still thought about me and made sure everything was alright for me. I knew that in an emergency, she would be there for me. I actually always felt it was a privilege and fun to be the daughter of a psychiatrist.



Duke University Health System
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Conference Presentation Archived Files

5th Annual Duke Medicine Patient Safety and Quality Conference Presentations

Being Open With Patients and Families about Adverse Events

Albert Wu, MD, MPH

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health



[Being Open with Patients and Families about Adverse Events.pdf](#)

Safety Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch: The Intersection of Quality, Stress and Fatigue in a Clinical Area Near You...

J. Bryan Sexton, PhD

Duke University Health System Patient Safety, Training and Research Center



[Safety Culture.Sexton.pdf](#)

Context and Vision: Patient Safety and Quality at Duke

Karen Frush, MD

Duke University Health System Patient Safety Office



[DUHS pt safety 5 yrs.pdf](#)

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Enhancing Caregiver Resilience: Burnout & Quality Improvement Full Course**(3 days: 1 full day plus two half days, and a follow-up webinar)**

Location: The Hilton, Durham: January 24-26, 2011

Before we care about quality, we have to care about our work, and before we can care about our work, we have to take better care of ourselves. Where are the role models for resilience and self care? The growing consensus in the peer reviewed literature is that burnout levels in healthcare workers are reaching the breaking point. Against the backdrop of healthcare reform and economic uncertainty, our resilience is even further compromised.

Quality improvement efforts frequently ignore the need to make sure that caregivers are ready for the next big initiative, and rarely do they first build up the resilience of staff before expecting even higher levels of quality and safety to be delivered. For some, jumping into innovation is a reasonable first step. But for many individuals and work units, there needs to be a focus on the caregivers, and their needs, to build capacity and bounce back from burnout, before providing the training and the tools to improve quality in a sustainable way.

This is a special course at the Duke Patient Safety Center. We designed it to meet the needs of our patient safety and quality improvement communities. We did not realize it would be such a potent and positive experience for the participants, and for the course faculty. The course is designed for caregivers in formal or informal leadership roles, but participants include executives, staff physicians, and nurses. For this to translate to the individual (resilience role-modeling), come by yourself – but for it to translate to the unit, please bring at least 2 people from your clinical area.

In this course, we provide participants with real-time feedback on burnout, depression, health behaviors, human limitations and human nature. Participants are provided their individualized feedback in a confidential manner, and are given a structure with protected time to practice, and to work on themselves and their units. This on-site course occurs three days in a row, whereby day 1 is a half day, followed by a full day on day 2, with one more half day on day 3. The webinar occurs one month later. The nature of this intervention requires the two full nights of sleep and the protected time, so this cannot be condensed. This is an intense and rewarding experience for participants, full of self reflection, validation, coaching, and recharging those nearly-dead batteries.