Practical Approach to Walking in Balance

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Official Disclosure Statement

It is the policy of the AAFP that all individuals in a position to control content disclose any relationships.....

In general, and legally for me, this is true. I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose.

But...
WARNING!

- …I have a clear bias!
- I love Family Medicine!
Learning Objectives

- Recognize, accept and when possible reframe stressors
- Consider some useful tools
  - For personal as well as patient care use
- Transform stress into healthy growth!
- Rekindle your fire and enthusiasm
- Challenge you to walk your talk!

First…
It’s not you!!!

- It’s…
- The system is not healthy
- You do not need to be more “resilient”
- These tools can help you as you work to change your systems
Good news!

- 75% of Family Physicians are satisfied with job
  - 89% of those who are sole owners say this!
- 55% of you would be a Family Physician again if you did it over
- 79% of you have a good sense of well-being
- 80% of AAFP members say “I enjoy my work”
- Where are you on this scale?
But…

- We do not feel respected by other physicians
- We do not have the time we need with patients
- Almost everyone believes family physician burnout is prevalent among colleagues
- 38% are feeling like they are burning out
- 11% (1 in 10) feel completely burned out
Burnout

- A work related phenomenon
- Can impact personal life as well
- Can be burned out at work, but overall happy
- Lack of burnout does not equal well-being
- We will focus on ways to help improve your sense of well-being
Really important point!

- Your challenges and hurdles will not change with platitudes or thoughts of the day or yoga
- You are not solely responsible for “getting to a better place”
- The system that most impacts you has real issues
- One key is to get to the right tables
  - Be part of the discussions
  - Nothing about us without us!
Truths and Tools
For You, and
Can be used with Patients
Truths

- Words are important
- Interactions are critical
- Stress is impacted by control and isolation
- Choice is a powerful tool
Words Are Important

- In general, do you use positive or negative words?
- Does that change when you are stressed
- The subtle danger of “I have to go to work today.”
- TGIF vs TGIT
- “Problems” vs “Opportunities”
- Compliance vs adherence
- PCP vs Family Physician
- Burn-out vs Resiliency
Interactions and contact are important

- Exercise
  - Introduce yourself briefly, but avoid titles and roles!
- Share with each other one thing
  - That is stressing you now, and
  - One that has helped you cope
- You each have 2 minutes
Interactions and contact is important

- How did that go?
- Introductions without titles can be odd!
- Did you share stresses?
- Sharing can lead to attitude change
- You are not obligated to “fix” anything!
- What were some coping strategies?
Life is Stress!

▪ Everything causes “stress”
▪ Stress is required for physiologic growth
  ▪ Bones, muscle strength, and so on
▪ Stress is required for intellectual growth
  ▪ Our best teachers “stressed” us!
▪ Stress is required for emotional/spiritual growth
▪ Others look to you for clues
What Impacts Stress?

▪ Autonomy
  ▪ Control is good!
  ▪ Lack of control or input is not
▪ Connection
  ▪ Support is good!
  ▪ Feeling isolated is not
▪ How many of you feel in control and supported?
▪ You likely have more than you might think
How do you find control and support?

- Find ways of reframing difficult circumstances in how you
  - Think
  - Talk
  - Act
  - For me that manifests as “It’s all good!”
- In some ways, you created this reality for yourself!
- How you talk and act are key to re-creation!
Critical Tool

- Respect for others is key!
- Especially in disagreements or crucial conversations
- You are a leader in your practice
- How can you help your team and your patients feel supported and in control?
Basic Questions

- Why did you choose this profession?
  - To help people!
- Do you have role models you want to emulate?
- Do you know clinicians
  - Who seem not to like their jobs or patients?
  - That you never want to become?
- So did they at one point!
Where does your passion go?

- Your training may have contributed
  - Loss of self-confidence
  - Loss of sense of altruism
- Your employment status can contribute
  - Generational shift from “Calling” to “job”
  - The change to “shifts”
  - Fewer physician owned practices
- The pandemic and constant fear
It’s all about **Choice**

- Every thought you have, every comment you make, every action you take…
- Moves you along a path
- You are becoming someone’s role model
- Are you going down the negative path
- Or the positive one?
- It is always your choice!
Wellness is about **Choice**

- You **cannot** control the feeling you have from an incident
- You **can** control the way you respond to those feelings
- Over time, new response patterns can change emotional patterns
- If you are not satisfied how well you cope right now, make a different choice!
“Hurdles”?  

- What are hurdles to different choices?  
  - Other people’s attitudes  
  - The “system’s” attitudes  
  - Time constraints  
  - Administrivia  

- These can only be as big an issue as you allow!  
- It’s hard…unless it is not!
Truths

- You can only control your actions
  - Not anyone else’s
- We never really “Catch up”
- Things/Life does not suddenly
  - “...get better when...”
  - It mainly gets different!
Behavioral Choices

- Are you experiencing your life?
  - Or Delaying doing things you want to do?
- Commit to “experience” your life
- Explore your interests now
- Make moment to moment choices to enjoy the gifts of the “present”
- Enjoy what you do
  - Live passionately
Behavioral Choices

- How is your patience?
  - With your patients
  - With your staff
  - With your family
  - With yourself
Physician-Centered Care

- Taking “The History”
  - Much less personal connection with our patients
  - We emphasize certain aspects of the “history”
    - Social Hx: ??
    - Tobacco, alcohol, drugs…
  - Lists and templates
The Patient’s Story

▪ Semantics
  ▪ It is called “His” or “Her” story for a reason
  ▪ But we have lost the emphasis on obtaining stories
    ▪ Instead we check boxes on templates.
    ▪ More time is spent on “Chart care” than patient care
  ▪ One of the dangers of the “EBR”!
Getting the Story

- How much time do we allow patients to tell their story before we interrupt and take control?
  - 15 seconds!
  - Pay for Volume
  - Time pressure
  - Significant oversight of our documentation
- Stories are key to health and healing!
- And new E/M guidelines can help!
Putting Choice into Action
Transform Yourself and Your Practice

- Create more Patient-Centered processes
  - In your practice
  - In your style
- Try to take one thing away to try
- We will review a few options
- This is like an “Art” class
  - You choose the media, color, technique
  - Time to create masterpieces!
Inventory

- How do you currently demonstrate your Truth?
- How do you share who you are?
  - At home?
  - In the office?
- Are you satisfied with what you manifest?
- Take note if you say “No” at a deep level!
Environment

- Surround yourself with
  - Meaningful relationships
    - As best you can at work
    - And at home
  - Meaningful “Stuff”
    - Photos
    - Candles, fountains, icons
- Minimize stressful images
- Share yourself!
Healthy lifestyles

- The key to handling stress
- …and maintaining energy
- The foundation of any other technique
- In and of themselves can make a big difference.
- How do you feel about how you eat?
Diet Choices

- Drink Water!
  - Not sure exactly how much...
- Moderation
  - Caffeine
  - Alcohol
- The role of green and other teas
  - Making tea can be a ceremony
Other Choices

- In what ways do you incorporate exercise into your life?
- What is the best exercise?
  - What you will do consistently!
- Cardiovascular
- Flexibility
- Weight-training
- Yoga, Tai Chi, massage, etc
- “Nature Deficit Disorder”
Yoga Techniques (More detail next slides)

- Relaxation Breath (4-7-8)
  - For your use
  - For your patients
- Fire breath
  - For energy
- Poses and stretches
  - Can be done in a chair at work
- Yin Yoga!!
Relaxation Breath

- From Yoga
- Adapted by Dr. Andrew Weil
- Great for insomnia, panic disorders

**Technique**
- Inhale through nose for a count of four
- “Hold” (don’t breath) for a count of seven
- Exhale through mouth for a count of eight
- Do four cycles

[https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324417#how-to-do-it](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324417#how-to-do-it)
Fire Breathe

- From Yoga
- Stimulates energy
- Technique is shown in this video
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gpYEvALCZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gpYEvALCZA)
Arms Forward Stretch

- Bring arms to shoulder level.
- Clasp hands together, press them onto your chest.
- Lift head to stare at the ceiling
- Hold this position a second or two
- Inhale then Exhale
  - Lower head, press your chin onto your chest.
  - Stretch arms straight out in front of your chest
- Inhale
  - Return hands to the chest
  - Lift the head up and back.
- Do this three times
Yoga

• "Yoga" is often a technique that is active
  ▪ It requires strength and balance
  ▪ It is quite “Yang”
  ▪ It can be very frustrating!

• Yin yoga is slow
  ▪ Poses are held longer
  ▪ No perfect pose exists as it depends on your body
  ▪ Great for flexibility
  ▪ “Osteopathic yoga!

• One three minute yin yoga pose demonstrated
  ▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgsYVGvxFQI
Benefits

- Yoga poses and breath work can help you handle stress
  - Anyone can do Yin or restorative yoga
- And you can use these techniques to treat patients!
  - For stress and anxiety issues
  - For depression
  - For flexibility
- For me: I teach Yin an hour a week
  - Detox-Retox
Placebo Effect = Healing Response

- Treatment ally
- All treatments can have a specific effect
- All treatments have some healing effect
- All *encounters* have potential effect
- Key part of a good bedside manner
  - Often missing
Communication (Life/Leadership) Skills

- The Four Agreements (Don Miguel Ruiz)
  - Be impeccable with your word.
  - Don't take anything personally.
  - Don't make assumptions.
  - Always do your best.

- AAFP (Doug Henley)
  - Assume Good Intent
  - Cheerful Persistence
Communication (Life/Leadership) Skills

- Make the effort to communicate with other people
  - Patients
  - Your Healthcare Team
  - Your friends and family
- Be tolerant
- Listen!
  - Allow others to speak
  - Open-ended questions
- Poor communication choices require much time to soothe unhappy/hurt people
The “Biggie”

- Recognize and respond to emotion!
  - Without becoming defensive
  - Or Angry
  - Or clicking into didactic mode
- Information does not overcome emotion!
- You are not required to “fix” anything
- Emotion is okay & real and needs validation
Handling Emotion

- Recognize it and state it
  - Bring the Inside Out!
  - “You are…” angry/frustrated/sad/whatever
  - Trust your intuition as to what it is
- Just listen
- Try not to say “I understand”
- Or “Don’t be…”
- Be okay with saying “I’m sorry you have to deal with this”
Personal “Power”

- What kind of image are you presenting?
  - How is it working for you?
  - For your patients?
- Everything carries potential meaning
The Outside Reflects “You”!

- Clothes are part of your persona
  - Who are you being right now
  - Why did you make your choices?
- Jewelry
  - Ornaments have a long history of symbolism
  - The metals, the stones and the style
- Your “environment” gives messages to others
Perspective is key

- Half-empty or half-full?
- Impacts your life path tremendously
- Impacts patient care tremendously
- Neither is better!
- Both approaches “work”
Half-Full Warning!

- Remember you always have a choice
- Today is yours for a reason
- The “challenges” you face can be seen as
  - Your teachers of the moment
- You chose this profession to help people
  - They are rarely at their best when they need it the most
- Laugh regularly and easily
Handling Life

- Things happen
  - I think for a reason!
  - But even if you don’t subscribe to that view
    - They happen
    - And you have to respond
- What is the teaching you can get out of the moment?
  - What can you use to grow?
  - What can you learn so as not to repeat it?
Let’s Prepare to Walk Our Talk!

If you can do it, you can teach it
Consider…

- How can you create sacred space around you?
- How can you change your work environment?
- How can you bring ceremony into your life?
- How can you bring gratitude into your life?
Create Sacred Space!

- Circles for meetings
- Comfortable surroundings
- Nice sounds like Water or Chimes
- Time for breathing, pausing, yoga
- Take the space with you
  - What you write with
  - What you drink with
- What one thing will you do?
A Day of Ceremony

- Implement ritual and ceremony
- Morning affirmation/beginning
- Yoga or prayer
- Make coffee/tea/water special!
- Enjoy sacred space
- Do something outside
- **Experience** your meals
- Cultivate thankfulness many times a day
- Have a closure to the day
- What one thing will you do?
Cultivate Thankfulness!

- You are doing what you dreamed of
- You are helping people every day
- You are where you are supposed to be right now
- Cool evening ceremony
- How will you demonstrate gratitude each day?
- At the same time
  - Be the change you want to see in the world - Gandhi
Prioritize Your Needs

- What do you need the most to regain your passion?
- What would best support your efforts?
- Write it down, address it to you
- Follow-up with yourself in 6 months
Create your Reality!

- Prioritize changes
- Identify resources needed
- Find ways to gain some control
- Create, nurture and utilize support systems
- Be part of your own solution
- You can restore your heart into your art of medicine!