

Finding Balance and Efficiency in Your Career

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“Lord, Reverend, Doctor Gaston”

Does this really affect me?

- “There are those who learn by reading, those who learn by observation and those that have to pee on the electric fence themselves”

» Will Rogers



Success and Failure are One Commitment Away

- Burnout
- Stretched too thin
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Marital struggles
- Professional Fulfillment
- Financial Success
- Family success



Individual Balance

- Dynamic not static
 - Needs change
 - Age
 - Stage of career
 - Family needs
 - Balance must change
 - Left to nature it will move towards work
 - Takes “work” to move the balance to life

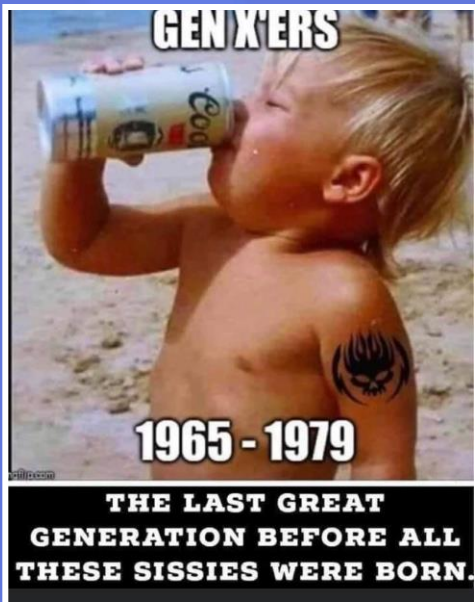


Individual Balance

Your Age

- “To my generation medicine was our life, to the next generation medicine was their career, and to the new generation medicine is their job”

» William B. Kleinman, MD



Individual Balance

Your Age

- “Glenn, I have published over 300 articles, taught almost 100 fellows, and spent countless hours revolutionizing hand surgery. That said, my relationship with my kids is what suffered. They are now grown and I feel like I barely know them. Don’t repeat my mistakes.”

» Past President ASSH during Young Leaders Dinner

Individual Balance

Your Stage of Career

- Early:
 - Available, Affable, Able
 - Practice building mode
 - Career building mode
- Mid Career
 - Practice is built
 - Career on a trajectory
- Late Career
 - Preparing transitions
 - Securing retirement plans



Individual Balance

Family Needs

- Partner

- Most important person in your life
- Tends to get time taken from the most to accommodate the other needs

- Children

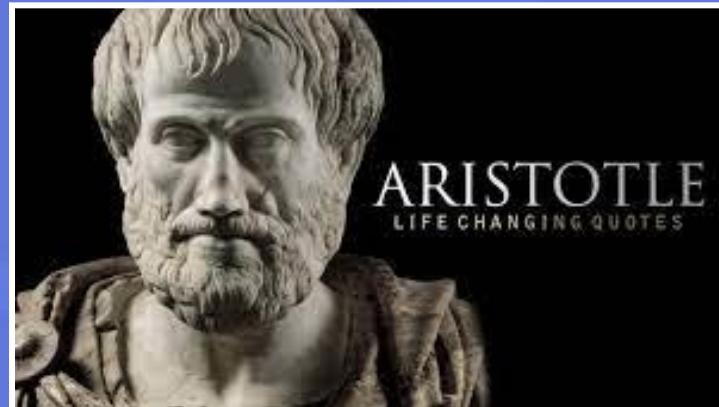
- Especially post COVID need IN PERSON time with a parent
- Highest ever rate of childhood depression & suicidal ideations
- They live in a virtual world with their devices, school, church, etc and need the family unit to be non-virtual
- What does the child of a doctor grow up wanting to be?
 - A patient so they can be cared for and spend time with their parent.



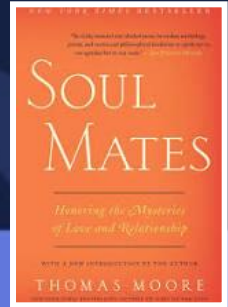
What is Balanced?

- “Life is an interplay of love, work, worship, and play”

»Aristotle



Is this Attainable?



- “Balance is a perfectionist’s idea—never to be found in actual life”
 - » Thomas Moore Soul Mates
- In my personal experience, it can be found but cannot be maintained without constant attention
 - Cobb County Rush Hour

Your Pie

- “Glenn, your pie is only so large. You can choose how you slice it”
 - » William B Kleinman, MD
- “ True, but if I am more efficient than others I can put more toppings on my pie”
 - » My response to William B. Kleinman, MD



Your Pie

- This concept is not new...
- “Margin”
 - Dr Richard Swenson

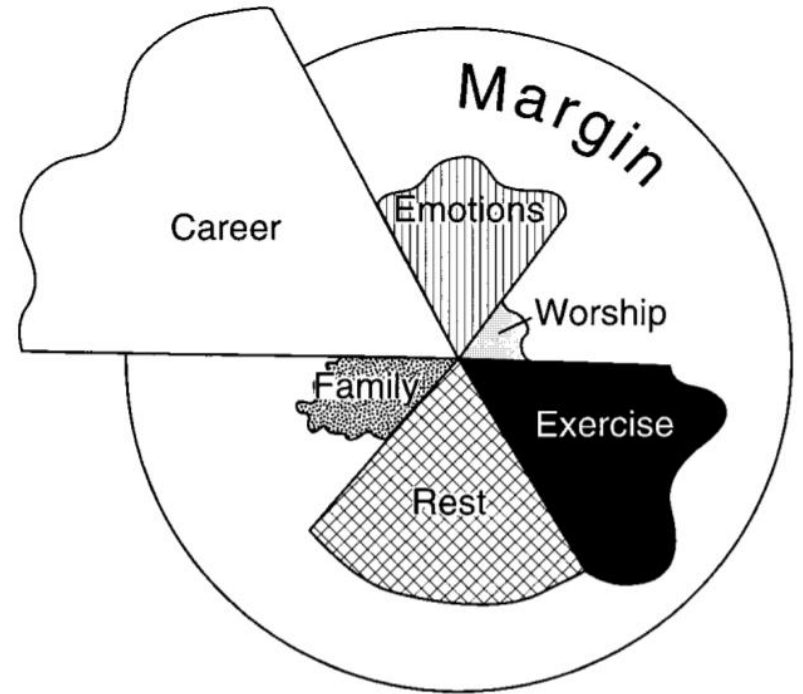


Figure 3. When we are out of balance, as with overex-tension into our careers, other areas of life receive far less (and probably inadequate) attention (illustrated here as family and worship).

Margin

- A lack of margin will have “our wallets get fatter, our houses get bigger, our cars faster, and our brains smarter. Yet when we neglect the most important priorities, our reward fittingly will be all the unhappiness money can buy”

» Richard A. Swenson, MD

So...How Do We Do It??

- Again, must be individualized...
- I'm a morning person
- Out of fellowship 4:30am alarms were the norm
- My first 5 years in practice I woke up at 5am and was in office by 5:45am

My Early Career

- 5:45-8am
 - This was “my time”
 - Dictations
 - Pre-reading for office and surgery
 - Research
 - Letters to referring physicians
 - Powerpoint talks



My Early Career



- 5:15-9pm

- This was “family time”

- Only call disrupted this time
 - Family dinner at the table
 - Bathing kids
 - Bed time stories
 - Massage wife’s feet during a TV show
 - “Monthly date night”
 - “Annual Father Daughter Date Night”



Later in My Early Career

- 9pm-11pm or later
 - Overflow work time
 - More research
 - More powerpoints
 - “I can sleep when I’m dead”



Mid Career



- I was overwhelmed
- My pie was too small for my demands
- Professionally:
 - Chief of hand, starting a fellowship, speaking nationally monthly, had piles of manuscripts needing attention, covering every pro team in Charlotte
- Family:
 - My kids weren't just diaper changes & bed time stories but now had sporting events, school plays, recitals, etc. Aside from the one date night there was no time for my wife
- Notable absence of personal time

Mid Career

- Key changes
 - Lecture by Jack Flynn
 - Dinner with Andy Palmer
 - The most supportive wife (sage) reminds me of balance

Jack Flynn, MD

- Grand Rounds talk on Peak Performance for Surgeons
 - “Deep Dive Day”
 - “Surgeon-Athlete”



Deep Dive Day

- One day per month
- Nothing scheduled
- I wake up, work out, then have 8-12 hours completely free
 - Email purge
 - Administrative work for residency/fellowship
 - Write papers
 - Powerpoints
 - Those early mornings and late nights are NO LONGER adequate to meet career demands & now that time goes back to family where it belongs

Surgeon-Athlete

- Our job is physically, mentally and emotionally draining
- Hedonic treadmill
- Like world cup match tomorrow
 - Must be well rested
 - Must have time to yourself for exercise and to clear your mind



Andy Palmer



- Presidential Address to ASSH on “Balance” in 1998
 - I was a second year medical student to whom it did not apply
 - 2016:
 - My career had progressed more rapidly than I anticipated
 - Dr Palmer was in town for a research project together and we spent the evening having dinner and drinks
 - I learned about balance

My Wife

- “That sounds good, what are you dropping to make time for that?”
- Wednesday half day
 - Lunch with wife
 - Personal time
- “The boys go to college in three years”
 - Family vacations

Efficiency

- Practice is slammed, professional career needs seemingly at an all time high, family needs more attention, but your pie is only so big...
- “Focus on being productive instead of busy”
 - » Tim Ferris
- “The test of your life is not how much you do, but the passion with which you do it.”
 - » Mother Theresa

Office Efficiency

- Tangibles
 - Finding lost time
 - Creating time
- Intangibles
 - Functioning as a TEAM
 - Gaining patient trust rapidly



Tangible Efficiency

- Finding lost time
 - LOTS of small time lost
 - Between OR cases
 - Between office sessions
- Ideas
 - Self pay/unhealthy patient cases last (highest chance cancel)
 - VIP only slots start and end of sessions

Tangible Efficiency

- Creating Time
 - EMR macros
 - Work flow (nurse orders correct x-rays first)
 - Pre-printing NCV & MRI reports
 - Having real plans in your notes
 - “If this then that, if that then this”
 - Especially important early career
 - 1. Don’t reinvent the wheel
 - 2. Avoid contradicting yourself

Intangible Efficiency

My Team

- Flynn “Surgeon-Athlete” should be amended to include the team concept
- Teams always outperform individuals
 - “It is the long history of mankind that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively prevail”

» Charles Darwin





- My team:
 - Family team
 - Work team (nurse, AA, MA, surgery scheduler, partners, fellows)
- Make one team
- Make both know you love them and care about them
 - People want to help those who help them

Intangible Efficiency

My Team

- Co-mingle these teams
 - My wife and kids bring treats to my work team about quarterly (Valentine cookies, Halloween treats (arm lollipops), Christmas card, etc)
 - Social outings where all attend (outfield at baseball games, Arms for All events)



Intangible Efficiency

My Team



- Work Team
 - End of year personal letter
 - Ensure they know you appreciate them and care about them
 - Find your own way
 - My kids helped my nurse landscape her yard bringing fill dirt in their pick up trucks
 - My daughter always writes notes and drawings and tapes to their office walls
- The Team works tirelessly for me to make me efficient!!

Intangible Efficiency

My Team

- Other key ingredients:
 - No task is below you
 - Earn respect by being a team player yourself
 - Team outings
 - Combined calendars
 - Not my personal strength



Intangible Efficiency

My Team

- Seeing a few more patients per session..
 - 20 pts per session...add 2 more per session and you can drop an entire half day with no change in production
 - Start a touch earlier
 - Add one per session every 2 months when you start
 - Team gradually gets more and more efficient
 - Now 75-80 patient days possible

Intangible Efficiency

Patient Trust

- Hand surgery is beautiful
 - So is the human attached to the hand
- You must find your way to convey empathy & love
 - Once achieved both get more pleasure and efficiency vastly improves

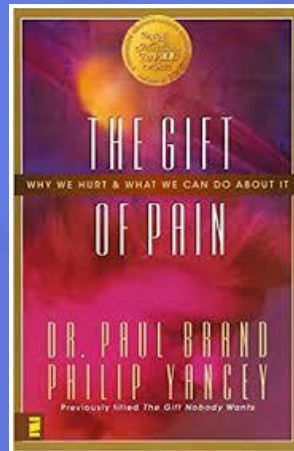


Intangible Efficiency

Patient Trust

- “When we have shared not only our knowledge and skill but part of ourselves with our patients, when we see something of hope and faith awaken in them, then something comes back to us. It is in the mutuality of medical care that we experience real joy.”

» Paul Brand, MD



Intangible Efficiency

Patient Trust

- My Tips
 - 1. Eyes below theirs
 - 2. TOUCH
 - 3. “Everyone gets something”
 - 4. Fun fact
 - 5. “I’ll keep you and your family in my prayers”



Intangible Efficiency

Patient Trust

- Interactions are meaningful
- They must know you care
- Complications are understood
- Highs higher and lows not as low



Summary

- Recognize the need for balance
- See it's dynamic and individualistic
- Maximize efficiency to allow more time for the things you love

Paul Brand, MD

- “A special source of happiness in hand surgery is the interaction between me as a person and the person of my patient. The hand, more than any other organ except the brain itself, is symbolic of the mind and soul of a person. It represents his life, his work, his strength and his love. One touch of a hand may mean more than a thousand words. The quality of the touch of my hand may mean more to a patient than the assurance of my voice or even the content of what I say. Touch is mutual. It is a seal of the oneness of the sick person and the healer. It is a statement that my thought and understanding, my sympathy and my faith have gone into the diagnosis and will now carry us forward together through the treatment. As a person, I stand behind my judgement, and with my hands, I demonstrate that I am there to serve the person whose life now is somewhat linked with mine.”



Thank You

