

Maintaining a Work-Life Balance

Hi this is John Pula. I'm a neurologist and neuro-ophthalmologist at the UICP, and I work in both a clinical and academic environment. I want to talk a little about maintain a work life balance. After residency and fellowship, irrespective of your career path in neuro-ophthalmology, it is important to keep a balance between work and life. There is a doctrine that



your life is made of many pieces. If one piece becomes too big, you won't have anything left over once it comes to an end. However, if you divide your life equally into many parts, the loss of one piece wouldn't be quite as bad.

As you are starting your career, you may feel the need to:

- make an impression on your senior partners that you are a hard worker
- work as much as you can now to secure your tenure/partnership/research grant
- sacrifice the other parts of your life temporarily, and worry about them later
- avoid appearing lazy, disinterested, or apathetic

On the contrary, by keeping interests outside of work, your co-workers and partners will recognize that you are preparing for the long-term by developing a stable social network, keeping a healthy lifestyle, and retaining a spirit of curiosity towards the world around you.

There have been many studies on happiness over the last 20 years. 'Happiness psychology' is as important today as studying depression, because employers recognize that a happier person is more likely to keep their job and to perform it well. When you break down all these studies and define what determines if one person is happy and another is not, the biggest variable is not job performance or how much money you make; it is the number and strength of relationships a person has with family and friends. With this in mind, we should all have the goal of creating and fostering our personal relationships.

Neuro-ophthalmologists are unique in character and mentality from other subspecialties. We pride ourselves on our intellectual curiosity, on being defenders of the diagnostician as an integral part of medicine, and on our respect for our predecessors, many of whom have legendary stories told about their total work immersion. What tends to be forgotten however, is that most of us are not able to function like these legends. In addition, this mythology ignores or omits facts showing that even these giants took time out for their families and forged deep relationships with the people around them. We are all trying to do our best for our patients and for the field of neuro-ophthalmology, but the great majority of us need to take some time for ourselves in order to accomplish these goals, and that's OK.

Life is far too important to be taken seriously.
-- Oscar Wilde

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