WORK-LIFE BALANCE EXERCISES

Finding Meaning in Work

1. Think of your present work. What image best represents your own experience of the work you do day to day?

2. If you could put aside some of the day to day logistics and demands of your work, what image would you envision that would represent a more ideal version of your work?

3. Are the images different? If so, thoughts on why? Are there ways to bridge the two? Would there be value to you in doing so?

4. How would you define "Meaning" in relation to work?

5. Do you agree that Meaning, like clinical knowledge (with the necessary ongoing CME requirements), is something we need to intentionally re-visit and cultivate? Do you feel that, like CME requirements, our professional organizations encourage this? Are there ways that you already do this? Are there ways that you could improve on doing this?

Suggested Reading:

Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness*

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

John Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*

Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Towards an Undivided Life*

Rachel Remen, MD, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

Rachel Remen, MD, *My Grandfather's Blessings*

Determining Core Values

1. **From the list below, choose and write down every core value that resonates with you.** As you read through the list, simply write down the words that feel like a core value to you personally. If you think of a value you possess that is not on the list, write it down.

Abundance	Dedication	Kindness	Professionalism
Acceptance	Dependability	Knowledge	Punctuality
Accountability	Diversity	Leadership	Relationships
Achievement	Empathy	Learning	Reliability
Adventure	Encouragement	Love	Resilience
Advocacy	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Resourcefulness
Ambition	Ethics	Making a Difference	Responsibility
Appreciation	Excellence	Mindfulness	Responsiveness
Attractiveness	Expressiveness	Motivation	Security
Autonomy	Fairness	Optimism	Self-Control
Balance	Family	Open-Mindedness	Selflessness
Being the Best	Friendships	Originality	Simplicity
Benevolence	Flexibility	Passion	Stability
Boldness	Freedom	Performance	Success
Brilliance	Fun	Personal	Teamwork
Calmness	Generosity	Development	Thankfulness
Caring	Grace	Proactive	Thoughtfulness
Challenge	Growth	Professionalism	Traditionalism
Charity	Flexibility	Quality	Trustworthiness
Cheerfulness	Happiness	Recognition	Understanding
Cleverness	Health	Risk Taking	Uniqueness
Community	Honesty	Safety	Usefulness
Commitment	Humility	Security	Versatility
Compassion	Humor	Service	Vision
Cooperation	Inclusiveness	Spirituality	Warmth
Collaboration	Independence	Stability	Wealth
Consistency	Individuality	Peace	Well-Being
Contribution	Innovation	Perfection	Wisdom
Creativity	Inspiration	Playfulness	Zeal
Credibility	Intelligence	Popularity	
Curiosity	Intuition	Power	
Daring	Joy	Preparedness	
Decisiveness		Proactivity	

2. **Group all similar values together from the list of values you just created.** Group them in a way that makes sense to you, personally. Create a maximum of five groupings. See the example below.

Abundance	Acceptance	Appreciation	Balance	Cheerfulness
Growth	Compassion	Encouragement	Health	Fun
Wealth	Inclusiveness	Thankfulness	Personal Development	Happiness
Security	Intuition	Thoughtfulness	Spirituality	Humor
Freedom	Kindness	Mindfulness	Well-being	Inspiration
Independence	Love			Joy
Flexibility	Making a Difference			Optimism
Peace	Open-Mindedness			Playfulness

3. **Choose one word within each grouping that represents the label for the entire group.** See the example below – the label chosen for the grouping is bolded.

Abundance	Acceptance	Appreciation	Balance	Cheerfulness
Growth	Compassion	Encouragement	Health	Fun
Wealth	Inclusiveness	Thankfulness	Personal Development	**Happiness**
Security	Intuition	Thoughtfulness	Spirituality	Humor
Freedom	Kindness	**Mindfulness**	**Well-being**	Inspiration
Independence	Love			Joy
Flexibility	**Making a Difference**			Optimism
Peace	Open-Mindedness			Playfulness
	Trustworthiness			
	Relationships			

4. **Add a verb to each value** so you can see what it looks like as an actionable core value. For example:

Live in freedom.
Seek opportunities for making a difference.
Act with mindfulness.
Promote well-being.
Multiply happiness.
This will guide you in the actions you need to take to feel like you are truly living on purpose.

5. **Finally, write your core values in order of priority**. For example:

1. Live in freedom.
2. Act with mindfulness.
3. Promote well-being.
4. Multiply happiness.
5. Seek opportunities for making a difference.

Work-life integration

Developing strategies to align your values and creating overlap between the domains of self, home/family, career, and community.

1. What activities do you participate in that fall into each of the four domains?

2. How much time do you spend in each of the activities and is there overlap between the domains?

3. Draw a circle map of your time and your activities and share with a neighbor.

Example
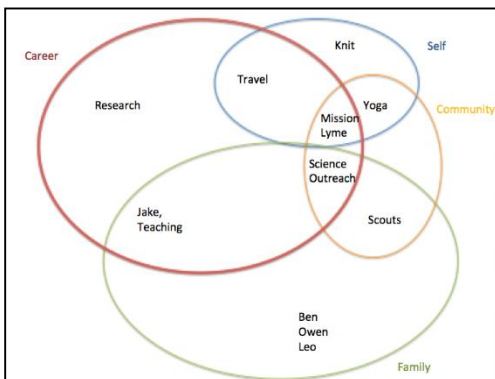
Reflect on your diagram as to whether there are changes that would enhance overlap or alter the size of the circles.

Suggested Reading: Total Leadership, Author: Stewart D. Friedman, Published: Aug 19, 2014

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

Structural Barriers:

Considering Your Own Institution

1. What are the resources that your institution offers in supporting your goal of feeling balanced?

    a. Mentoring?

    b. Formal Policies?

    c. Work Environment?

    d. Promotion and Tenure?

    e. Logistics?

    f. Culture?

    g. Others?

2. What are the barriers within your institution that prevent you from achieving balance?

3. Which of these factors present an opportunity for you to make a change within your institution that would allow you to feel more balanced?

4. What changes can you make in your personal decisions/planning that will allow you to achieve better balance?

<u>Self-Care</u>

In your work…

What contributes to burnout (loss of idealism, energy & purpose)?
What causes moral distress (inability to act in ways consistent with your personal and professional values)?
What contributes to compassion fatigue (diminished emotional energy to care for patients)?

Discussion

1. How might you regularly appraise & regulate the work life factors below?

   a. Workload
   b. Control
   c. Reward
   d. Community
   e. Fairness
   f. Values

2. Which of the following elements would you like to address for self-care? How might you do so?

   a. Supportive network of peers/coworkers
   b. Flexibility in daily life
   c. Self-awareness, attention to emotions
   d. Skills for empathy
   e. Mindfulness
   f. Hobbies & Leisure activities
   g. Relationships with family & friends
   h. Healthy diet
   i. Regular exercise
   j. Sleep
   k. Vacation

3. How might you develop, support, or promote institutional metrics for physician satisfaction & well being?

Additional Background on Burnout

Burnout

    a. Screen with 1 or 2 questions:

    b. "Do you feel burned out from your work?"[1] (emotional exhaustion)

    c. "I have become more callous toward people since I took this job"[2]   (depersonalization)

    d. Burnout predicts lower satisfaction with career choice,[3] job turnover & poorer health,[4] is associated with physician errors, lower patient satisfaction,[5] unprofessional conduct[6] & elevated physician suicide rates.[7] Being married and having children are protective against burnout.[8]

    e. Focusing FIRST on clinician work life (eg increasing visit length and reducing panel size) can reduce burnout, improve clinical quality & patient experience, and reduce costs.[9]

    f. Doctors stress importance of self-care, stress management to patients, rarely attend to own self-care[10] [11] [12]

Evidence-Based Self Care Practices

    g. Coaching: Focuses on setting & reaching goals. Helps individuals to improve well-being, find personal success, manage life change, and address personal challenges, such as work-related stress and work–life balance. Physician coaching helps with boundary setting, prioritization, managing self-expectations, saying 'no', time management, self-care/compassion & self-awareness[13]

    h. Real-time monitoring with wearables may provide feedback to help manage chronic daily stressors[14]

Training/Education in Self Care

    i. MedEd training generally inadequate, overly focused on communication & reflective writing

    j. Residency programs do offer some support (Balint, counselors, skills sessions, etc)[15]

    k. Hospice & Palliative Care fellows have core competencies that include self care & burnout prevention[16]

    l. Teaching a Mind Body Medicine course associated with decreased stress and increased mindfulness on part of faculty facilitators[17].

    m. A few 1 hour sessions on mindfulness may not be enough to provide measurable benefits.[18]

Systems Approaches

    n. Physician well-being metrics should have same level of importance as financial, quality, and patient satisfaction metrics.[19]

    o. Multiple systemic approaches to promoting self care & reducing burnout have been suggested.[20]

Barriers to Self Care

Stigma to getting help, conspiracy of silence; Ignorance, indifference & carelessness toward own health; Negligence in having physical exams; Procrastination in seeking treatment; Medical culture values/norms not supportive etc.[21] [22] [23] [24]

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