

## Overview:

One of the most frequently identified concerns in physician well-being is the challenge of having a life outside one's practice. Residents surveyed at a US medical center on well-being concerns ranked balancing multiple roles as their top concern. In a subsequent resident retreat, the break-out group on balancing multiple roles drew the largest number of residents. Discussion was very active, open and reflected the challenges residents have in managing their roles as resident, partner, parent, sibling, son/daughter and oh yes, human being.

Residency is a time of imposed change in the balance of these roles. Some of these impositions include:

- geographic move with likely separation from family, relatives, friends, home culture
- decreased leisure time with long weeks, exams to prepare for, papers to write, etc
- decreased flexibility with one's schedule with mandatory training activities that as a result dictate when you are able to take time off

Much is available on this topic and will be linked to below, but here are a few practical steps to help you become mindful on how to address the challenges to balancing the multiple roles.

**1. Clarify your roles.** Consider all the different roles you do have in your life. Here's a quick checklist to clarify your roles. This is a partial list and you may have more:

- Do you have parents who are alive? If so, you have a role as son/daughter.
- Do you have siblings? If so, you have a role as brother/sister.
- Are you married or in a committed relationship? If so, you have a role as spouse/partner.
- Do you have children? If so, you are a parent.
- Do you have relatives? If so, you have a role(s) as grandchild, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew.
- Do you participate in a religion? If so, you may have a role as elder, committee member, etc.
- Do you take care of your home, laundry, budget, food? If so, you have a homemaker role.
- And then there is your role as resident with its multiple sub-roles as patient care provider, student, researcher, etc.

**2. Clarify your time commitments in each role.** Assuming 7 hours of sleep per night you have 119 waking hours per 7 day week. If your duty hours range from 60-80, you have 39-59 hours left for all your other roles, including the resident roles of student and researcher. How much time per week would you like to give to each role? What's ideal? It may be wise to ask the people involved in your life in each role for their input on this, but start by letting them know how much time is already

needed for residency. Check this site for another way to check your time commitments:

<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2001/0200/p66.html>

3. **Reduce your time in the least important roles.** Can you hire a housekeeper 1-2 times a month to do the regular cleaning? Can you send out the laundry? Check your priorities using time management guidelines. A succinct guide to time management is found at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2608106/pdf/jnma00386-0057.pdf>

4. **Be kind to yourself.** Your residency hours will vary from week to week and so will the time you have for your other roles. Use well-being strategies noted on this website and elsewhere to help you take care of yourself. Practice good sleep hygiene and nutrition. Use the survival tips for residency: <http://www.pairo.org/Content/Default.aspx?pg=1231>

5. **Seek the advice of others.** Ask your mentor, key faculty, other residents, program director or others for advice on how to seek balance in multiple roles. We are all confronted by this challenge and many may have learned ways that you might find helpful.

### Additional Information:

- Advice on balancing family and career - <http://www.annals.org>
- AMA Women Physicians Congress resources and links on work/life balance - <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/women-physicians-congress.shtml>
- Female Physicians and role balance - <http://ap.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/28/4/331>
- Medical Marriage: Sustaining healthy relationships for physicians and their families - [https://catalog.ama-assn.org/Catalog/product/product\\_detail.jsp?productId=OP209200](https://catalog.ama-assn.org/Catalog/product/product_detail.jsp?productId=OP209200)
- MomMD website advice - <http://www.mommd.com/10waysbalancework.shtml>