

March More Voices: Finding Balance

Category: Finding Balance

written by Paul Gross | March 1, 2023

Dear *Pulse* readers,

When our daughters were little, I would head home from my workday thinking, *Now I can finally relax.*

Of course, once I got home, any notion of relaxation took a back seat to my second job, which involved game playing, food dispensing, story reading, diaper changing, song inventing and rule enforcing. There was often great joy in these activities—and, to be honest, some boredom and fatigue as well.

I wanted to be a great father and also a great doctor and teacher. It was hard to do any of those things exceptionally well. It was impossible to excel at all three. *Can I be satisfied, I wondered, with simply being good enough?*

At the same time, I wondered how my patients found balance. One mother got up at 5:00 in the morning, left the house by 6:00 for a subway ride and a train commute to a factory job out in New Jersey. She wouldn't return home until 7:30 or 8:00 at night.

One dad got up at 3:00 in the morning so he could line up outside a placement office at 4:30 in hopes of landing a day job when the place opened at 6:00.

There were moments when I felt as if my work-life balance problems were the puny trials of an advantaged doctor. At the same time, these puny trials were often all I could handle. I needed more hours in the day. More sleep. Less worry.

When I think of balance, negotiating the demands of work and family comes to mind. But, in fact, balance determines every aspect of life and health.

How do I balance my best medical judgment against the need for a therapeutic relationship with an anxious patient who exclaims, "Doctor, I've been coughing for a week. I need a chest x-ray!"

Balance the quest for an unlikely diagnosis against a CT scan's radiation or an MRI's cost?

Balance my desire to give a patient all the time they need against my wish to avoid the wrath of Mrs. Vargas, who's already been waiting for an hour-and-a-half?

Balance the wish to get blood sugar under better control against the patient who says, "Doctor, I can't take one more pill!"

Balance the desire to finish today's notes against my wish to get a good night's sleep?

Balance the imperative to get some exercise against the need for rest?

Balance speaking the truth against preserving a relationship?

March's *More Voices* theme is [Finding Balance](#). Share your story with us.

For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#). And have a look at last month's theme, [Suicide](#).

Remember, your health-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With warm regards,

Paul Gross
Editor