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Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) Curriculum

Self-Care for Leaders

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Originally Presented by [Eileen Piersa](#) & [Holly Yang](#)

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Contact the LDI Team

E-mail: Frank.Ferris@OhioHealth.com

Frank D. Ferris, MD

The Leadership Development Initiative

Kobacker House

800 McConnell Dr

Columbus, OH, USA 43214-3463

Phone: +1 (614) 533-6299

Fax: +1 (614) 533-6200

Overview

Leaders are 'doers'. Achievement, accomplishment, metrics and success are high values for those who find themselves on the vanguard. Physicians especially, become practiced at delayed gratification, and often find themselves caring for others at their own expense. Often the training process reinforces this brutal 'no-self-ness', (sleep deprivation, time and social pressures, personal isolation, etc.) and over time such behaviors may lead to exhaustion, burn out and 'compassion fatigue'.

It is said that no one can care for another well unless he/she takes care of him/herself well.

Self-care is not only necessary for the maintenance of a physician's well-being, balance (or lack of it) impacts every relationship in the circle of influence. Self-reflection and self-awareness enhance self-care and are a focus of a developing balance of the stresses and joys of professional life.

The session introduces an exercise to visually identify the relative important priorities of life and the current satisfaction of 'self-care' within each of those categories. Where there is a mismatch of relative value of the activity (time with family, time for exercise, sleep, etc.) and the current reality of the life activity, there is a deficiency of 'self-care'.

After identifying the personal areas where self-care can be personally improved, a variety of techniques and strategies to build self-care into each day are discussed. Developing rituals or touchstones to invite deep breathing, meditation, re-focusing and 'rest' are explored and encouraged. Key components recommended in the literature include a regular practice that has an element of self-reflection to derive greater meaning and purpose in life's activities and demands.

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Describe the value of self-care
2. Identify at least one area of self-care that can be better balanced
3. Create clear goals and a practice to support self-care during LDI and beyond

Important Teaching Points

- Identifying how one becomes 'empty' and changing habitual behaviors of over-responsibility is the first step to 'honoring self'
- Without intentionality to avoid it, no one is immune from burn out and compassion fatigue
- Self-care can take no more time than a breath
- Being in nature is a powerful way to recharge and refresh

- Developing one's own nurturing is the foundation of a successful work/home/life balance

Resources / References

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