

Take time to relax every once in a while to maintain your **well-being**

by Hannah McSawley, academic program coordinator at Wake Forest Eye Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Congratulations on surviving the busy season! Well-run interview sessions have been completed and ranking lists have been submitted. If you are like me, no doubt you are dusting off corners of your offices that have not seen the light of day for a while and brushing cobwebs out of your shelves. I have been busy reorganizing my files, throwing out the old, and restructuring the new. I was thinking a little about what worked well last year and what didn't, tweaking a little here and there and gently planning the year ahead. I was thinking today that as coordinators we spend all of our time tirelessly helping others. We organize, we analyze, we cajole, we allocate, and we tally, modify, and regulate. There is not much that we don't do throughout our busy days. However, when was the last time you took the time to do something for yourself?

Sustaining a balance of personal play versus program management in the yearly calendar of events, I think, is crucial to achieving a sense of wellbeing and happiness. It has long been known and accepted that having a rich array of experiences and hobbies builds up our creative, energetic, flexible, and resilient selves.

"We all acquire great satisfaction from working hard, and so we often work long hours, and it is all too easy to forget to take a step back and breathe once in a while."

-Hannah McSawley

When your passion is running your programs well and supporting residents, fellows, and program directors, the lines between work and play can smudge together somewhat. We all acquire great satisfaction working hard, and so we often work long hours, and it is all too easy to forget to take a step back and breathe once in a while. Although I still have the daily running of the fellowship and residency programs to attend to, during this time of the year it is rather nice to be able to calmly think and plan a little. It's nice to have a little downtime and it's nice to add some personal time in the mix. If we don't make time for fun stuff it will never happen.

Personally my outlook calendar is a rainbow of meetings and reminders and today I added a couple more. I took hold of my guilt complex in both hands and firmly sat it in the hallway, closed my office door, and then planned a couple of personal goals and scheduled the time to achieve them. On my list were some that I consider job related but others were fun options: start the Training Administrators of Graduate Medical Education certification process, attend the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology annual meeting, and writing more "Coordinator's corner" columns. But I also added my latest half marathon plans, which includes heading out into the sunshine for lunchtime runs four times a week, and scheduling a few afternoons that I leave work a couple of hours early and spend time alternating between my two children for some quality one-on-one time. As a child growing up I remember walking to the village market every Friday afternoon and picking up a rather large bunch of flowers which would wobble precariously on top of my grandmother's rolling shopping trolley as we walked home hand in hand. Once home I was allowed to help arrange these flowers in her many vases

and we would place them around the house, spreading color throughout. It was the happiest part of the week and it spread a happy glow of anticipation for a great weekend. I also think that what made it special was the way it held a regular place in our week. There was never a Friday when flowers were not bought, and so firmly was it placed on the schedule and so highly was it valued that the world truly would have collapsed in a horrifying shiver of dust the week we passed the flower shop without making a purchase. This was not something my grandmother was told to do, this was not a chore she somehow had to fit into her week, and this was not something she did for anyone else but herself. She did it because it made her feel good, lifted her spirits, and made the house look pretty. It soothed an entire household. And you know what? I think I'm going to stop by the store on the way home tonight.