Some Suggestions for Work-Life Balance in an Academic Career
- Personal Reflections -
The Ideal Academic Career

Good college
↓
Good medical school
↓
Good residency
↓
Good fellowship
↓
NRSA, K award…
↓
Faculty appointment
↓
R01s, publications…
↓
Success and Happiness
The Real Academic Career – an Example

- Good college
- Good medical school
- Good residency
- Good fellowship
- NRSA, K award…

Problem #1
Problem #1

Problem: I hated my NRSA project.

“DNAse hypersensitivity sites on the rat TSHB subunit gene”

Solution: I moved into clinical research, which I loved, and I’ve been doing it ever since.

Suggestion: Don’t do something you hate just because everyone tells you it’s the hottest thing to do. Be honest, and find something you like instead.
The Real Academic Career

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Problem #2
Problem #2
Problem #2

Problem: I married a guy who owed the US Air Force 4 years of his life.

Solution: I begged for a job at UTHSC. A year later, the GCRC associate program director job opened up there.

Suggestion:

1. Don’t attach yourself to someone who has signed a legal contract with the US government.

2. Exploit open niches, even if you’re not sure you’re qualified.
The Real Academic Career

Good college  
\[\downarrow\]
Good medical school  
\[\downarrow\]
Good residency  
\[\downarrow\]
Good fellowship  
\[\downarrow\]
NRSA, K award…  
\[\downarrow\]
Faculty appointment

Problem #3
Problem #3

Problem: I had children.

Solution: I started working part time.

Suggestion:

1. Decide what is best for you and your family, make a plan, and try not to compromise based on what other people want you to do.

2. Negotiate knowing your strengths.
The Real Academic Career

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↓

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↓

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↓

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↓

NRSA, K award…

↓

Faculty appointment

↓

R01s, publications…

Problem #4
• Healthy controls
• Dopamine
• Metoclopramide
• Somatostatin
• Naloxone
• Hydrocortisone
• TRH (7 days)
• Fasting
• Adrenal insufficiency
• TSH tumors
• Hypopituitarism
Problem #4

Problem: I got tired of my research ideas.

Solution: I began new projects with people who have interesting ideas and are great to work with.

Suggestion:

1. The people you work with are as important as the projects.

2. You can achieve professional satisfaction without an RO1 of your own.
The Real Academic Career

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Success and Happiness

Problem #5
Problem #5

Problem: Work overload

Solution: I started resigning from things and declining to do some other things.

Suggestion:

1. Don’t agree to do anything unless it serves at least two (and preferably three) purposes.

2. Don’t be afraid to say no. Practice in front of the mirror.
Problem #6

Problem: Ego

Solution: I’m trying to learn not to let external validation run my life.

Suggestion:

Don’t take a job or project just because it’s prestigious. If you’re happy where you are, thinking about staying put.
Why I’m in Academic Medicine

• There is someone on call between me and the diabetic patient with a glucose of 450 on a Sunday at 3 am.

• It is very satisfying to know a lot about a little organ.

• There is a lot of flexibility in what I do and when I do it.

• There is tremendous collegiality.

• It’s terrifically interesting.