

Life is a Balance

Frank Gromling, MS

Today, more than ever, chiropractors need to remember, "Life is a balance." Whether a recent graduate of chiropractic school or an experienced hand of 15 years, chiropractors often find themselves stressed by a multitude of pressures that create major imbalances in their lives. While these stressors have different roots, including student debt, business operation, and family strife, they all contribute to the same result: a dedicated health professional whose life is out of balance.

Perhaps better than any other medical professionals, chiropractors understand the effects that stress places on the body. Regardless of whether the stress is physical, chemical or emotional, the result is the same: an interruption of the body's ability to perform at its best because of spinal subluxation. While chiropractors see the effects of stress on their clients every day, they are sometimes unwilling or unable to recognize that stress is working on their bodies and minds in the same manner. The difference, however, is that chiropractors know better.

Let's look at the pressures that recent chiropractic school graduates might face in the first years of practice. When one receives a chiropractic degree, he or she also may receive a financial statement that shows a debt of somewhere between \$50,000 and \$100,000 for education. Though the interest rate may be low and the repayment terms aren't onerous, just the thought of starting out their new profession in a financial hole can be a major stress factor.

Then there is the situation in which the typical new chiropractor, who may be only 27 or 28 years old, with little business experience, and has to set up business and start making money. Two choices exist: team up with an old pro or open one's own office. Either way, the pressure is intense.

While joining an established practice may be less stressful, it has its moments: learning the ropes; establishing client trust and confidence; creating relationships with the other doctor and staff; perfecting one's techniques; and so on. On the other hand, starting a new practice from scratch is filled with stress. Almost every decision has a level of stress attached to it. Choosing a location; negotiating lease terms; recruiting and hiring staff; finding the necessary funding; and attracting clients can be very stressful events.

Although it is understandable how a new chiropractor can get caught up in the pressures of starting out, we must look deeper to determine how an experienced chiropractor might become imbalanced. One might think that a chiropractor that has been in practice for several years wouldn't have major stresses; the reality is very different.

First, there are those unpaid student loans: Debts of \$50,000-\$100,000 may take several years to go away. Then, what about the business start-up costs for that new practice? More borrowed money? How long before a positive cash flow allows a doctor to take a reasonable salary? Has the desired client base been reached?

As advertised throughout the chiropractic profession today, there is intense pressure on chiropractors to increase profitability by accepting divergent business concepts. For example, doctors are being told that the best way to increase revenues and profits is to do such and such, or follow this special approach, or sell these unique products. Chiropractors are bombarded with extensive advertising and promotion, all of which tells them that unless they join this latest program, they'll be left behind in the success race. This puts incredible stress both on those who choose to accept these new paradigms, as well as those who reject them in favor of "straight chiropractic" offices.

A deeper examination reveals that beyond the above business considerations, there are many personal concerns that may add even greater stress. For example, what happens when the doctor becomes so involved in healing that little time is left for family activities? As more time is spent at the office, less time is available for a spouse and children. Separation breeds discontent. Formerly close families become distant. Distances become greater and, in time, families fall apart. As it is widely recognized, the stress created by a failing marriage is second only to that experienced at the death of a loved one.

Another major stress factor occurs when chiropractors choose not to take care of their personal health. Failing to eat properly, take nutritional supplements, and exercise regularly always puts additional stress on the body and mind. As incredible as it seems, chiropractors, strong believers in the importance of a healthy body, often overlook their own health and thereby decrease their ability to perform at their optimum levels.

Is there nothing that can be done? Of course, there is. The first step is to remember, again, that life is a balance. From this simple statement, we can focus on five basic truths that will help anyone find the path back from imbalance to balance.

1. Know what you want. This sounds simple, but it is usually where most people get stuck. Each person must identify what is truly important. Ask yourself, "For what am I willing to go the distance? What makes me feel good about myself? What excites my inner spirit?" If you affirm that being a chiropractor is truly what you want, then you must figure out what chiropractic approach you will follow, what size practice you want, and so on.

When you have your answers, write down a simple set of goals and deadlines that you will follow daily. Remember, write it down. Unless your "life plan" is written, it is just a dream.

2. Become the best at what you do. The world is full of people who never achieved anything great because they were unwilling to excel at something. If you've identified that being a chiropractor is right for you, then it is your duty to become the best chiropractor that you can. This means that you must be willing to pay the price: attending continuing education seminars and courses; exchanging techniques with others; volunteering to be a mentor to new chiropractors; and whatever else you can do to be the best. Going the extra distance always produces greater results.
3. Make time for the important things. When our lives are imbalanced, it is because we have failed to keep our priorities straight. We forget what our major objectives are and allow less important events and people to take control of our time. In short, when we do this, we make a choice that other people and events are more important than our own lives. We can take back our lives by re-evaluating how we spend our time and with whom we are spending it. We can re-establish our priorities, then remain focused on fulfilling every one of them to the best of our ability.
4. Find the spiritual "self" inside. History shows us that most great people, those with significant

achievements and accomplishments, found a spirituality with which they were comfortable. Whether based in a traditional religion, or simply in a recognition of a powerful force behind the creation of the world and its inhabitants, these successful people believed in a spiritual base that gave them the strength, comfort, peace, joy and confidence for great accomplishments. Finding one's spiritual source is a powerful way to regain a desired balance.

5. Give up negative influences. By "negative influences" I mean the people, habits and actions that take away from a positive and successful life. Specifically, I suggest that you examine your personal relationships. If there are any relationships that diminish who you are, thus restricting your potential for a life of enjoyment, health and prosperity, you have to move away from them. Negative habits, such as addiction to tobacco and alcohol, must be changed in favor of a healthier lifestyle. Negative actions, whether yours or others, have to be traded for actions that bring positive results. Sharing gossip, being publicly critical of other chiropractors, and other negative actions can never bring happiness and health into one's life. Only positive influences will produce a successful life.

Now, it's up to you. Take the time to evaluate your life and how happy you are with it. If you are unhappy, change it. To start, follow the steps above. After all, what have you got to lose?

Frank Gromling, MS
Flagler Beach, Florida
888-690-2455
frank@gromling.com

APRIL 2002