



Promoting a balanced lifestyle in Oncology Nursing

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As a Young Cancer Nurse it is important to incorporate a balanced lifestyle into our lives. With the difficult year we've just had and many demands on young nurses including long hours, schedules and nightshifts, the thoughts of incorporating anything extra into life can seem such an impossible milestone... however, it is achievable with some small steps. If you are looking for ways to improve your work-life balance, there are a few great strategies you can try to get things back on track.

Self-Care

Self-care is key to promoting a balanced lifestyle in oncology nursing. By practicing self-care, nurses can secure some space in their schedules for much needed rejuvenation and relaxation. Meditation and mindfulness is one element of self-care that can help when we are exposed to situations of emotional vulnerability by being in continuous contact with patients and their suffering, which can cause conditions such as compassion fatigue. I have included an excellent video below from the Royal College of Nursing that I have used and hope you will all find useful – try it after a long day's work and let me know how you get on!

Eating Well

Part of leading a balanced lifestyle is incorporating diet and exercise into our lives. One thing that can help prevent physical fatigue and increase energy is making sure you are eating nutritious foods. There are many apps and websites give advice on having a balanced diet and being prepared will make you less likely to snack and overeat when you are tired or have come home after nights. Helpful hints to eating well include using a food planner or diary, batch cooking on your day off and shopping online – this will help you plan your meals prior to your shifts. Remember that small and consistent changes, for example, drinking more water and going outside for 20 minutes of fresh air can make such a big difference to your body and mind.

Goals and Priorities

You have chosen a wonderful career as an oncology nurse but what about life outside of work? It is important to set goals and priorities so you have something to look forward to outside the parameters of work. Achieving what makes you happy will give you more longevity and balance in terms of your lifestyle and career. Perhaps you would like to travel more or spend more time with your family – figure out what you would like to achieve in life and decide what is important in your life.

Asking for Help

Working as an oncology nurse can be challenging at times; if you find your responsibilities overwhelming it is ok to discuss this with your manager at work. In doing so you are taking control of what is important to you and being assertive to achieve a work-life balance.

Learning to Say "No"

Work is important. However, it is important to recognise that your wellbeing comes first above all. Give yourself permission to turn down commitments and work in a flexible pattern where possible. While this may not always be feasible, try to request shifts that will best suit your lifestyle. In doing so, you will be able to spend time more effectively with your family and peers.

Enjoy Life!

As the saying goes *"life is for living"* and there is no reason that you cannot have a fruitful career and personal life with looking after yourself as a priority. As Helena mentioned in her previous blog, you cannot pour from an empty cup, so learn to look after yourself first and foremost.

EONS and the IANO are here to support and network with young cancer nurses: please contact info@iano.ie or twitter @kathellgeraghty if you would like to get in touch.

Look out for Michaela's Blog next month where she talks about physicians and nurses: Equal Partners in Oncology Care

Helpful Resources

The Royal College of Nursing

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/library/subject-guides/wellbeing-self-care-and-resilience>

The Royal College of Nursing: After work guided meditation for staff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3z9f3OicLg>