

BATTLING BURNOUT

Ophthalmologists share personal strategies for reducing stress.

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DR. ATENCIO

FAMILY AND FITNESS

Both mental stress and physical pain can shorten a surgeon's professional career. The two things that keep me on track and help me to avoid burnout are my family and sports. Spending time with my two daughters and wife is key to forgetting about work and clearing my mind every day. Another way I relax from the stress of surgery and stay in shape is by playing sports. I am a sport multiplayer—every year, I pick a new sport to practice. It is important for surgeons to stay in shape and maintain good muscle tone to prevent the neck and back pain associated with performing surgery.



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DR. BENATTI

STRIKING A BALANCE

Ophthalmology is changing, the times are changing and eye care providers need to learn to adapt to the many evolutions. Between clinic, preoperative planning, surgery, postoperative follow-up, research and protocols, papers and articles, congresses, talk preparations, work-related events, maybe some nonprofit work, and family and friends—the list goes on, and responsibilities add up. Clearly, ophthalmologists are easy targets for burnout syndrome.

Once an ophthalmologist concludes residency and fellowship, he or she becomes a nearly perfect work-responsibility machine. Young ophthalmologists often know where they want to go career-wise and will get there at a price. But beware: That price should not be too high or harmful to your health. Keep in mind that you have a long career ahead, and you need to learn to strike a balance. Burnout at the start of this amazing journey is not conducive to a successful long career.

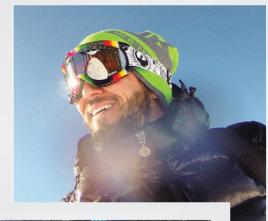
My advice is that, just as you comply with timetables and professional duties, you should also enjoy pastimes and take time to relax. I have dinner every Thursday with my childhood friends, no matter what. Luckily, I am the only doctor in the group, which means a night without mention of ophthalmology is guaranteed. On Sundays, I have lunch with my family. Sunday *Asado*—the Argentine national dish—is a must, and it is ideal to share with loved ones. I most enjoy spending time with people to whom I am very close—another great Latin habit.

It is essential to keep a healthy body and mind, so I train three times a week before getting to the office. I am also joining a school of sommeliers. I am a great fan of wines and hope to find the time to learn more about them; in fact, I might be a qualified sommelier before a PhD.

Not long ago, I was reading about the keys to success, and I came across what I believe is the perfect definition: "Passion, humbleness, and patience—above all, patience. Do not forget that the road is long and everything comes to you in the end."

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DR. FERREIRA

PHYSICIAN CARE

For my peace of mind, I am a CrossFit instructor and an active CrossFit athlete. I believe that it is extremely important for surgeons to participate in a demanding activity outside of our profession that brings peace of mind and helps make us better physicians. We are under significant stress and carry very important responsibilities for our patients. Thus, I believe that having a hobby that is demanding and requires a lot of energy is the key to avoiding physician burnout. These photographs show me taking place in the 2017 CrossFit Open, a high-demand competition held all over the world.



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DR. KHANDELWAL

MY BOYS

I enjoy spending time with my family and make that a priority. I walk in the door, and, from that second until they go to sleep, I focus on "my boys," ie, my husband and twin sons. Only then do I unpack my bag, change out of my scrubs, and sit down.

I love traveling and try to piggyback our trips onto my and my husband's busy travel schedules. I go to the gym and do classes to alleviate my stress and go to weekly brunch with my husband, kids, and friends.

My greatest concern about burnout is that the value of time I spend at work and away from my family is declining. My husband is not in medicine, and his time value at work increases while mine decreases as reimbursement decreases and overhead remains the same. Of course, value is more than money and I love what I do, so perhaps it will be enough to overcome that in the long run.



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DR. MATOSSIAN

STRESS RELIEVERS

I have incorporated several practices into my professional life to help relieve stress. First, I plan to take time away from work often with my family, spouse, or friends. Attending an ophthalmology meeting is a lot of hard work; it cannot be considered vacation.

Second, I pursue a hobby. Because ophthalmology forces us to stay in dark rooms most of the time, I love to hike outdoors whenever possible. The first photograph below shows my husband and I hiking in Sardinia in October 2017.

Third, I study wines, and, whenever we travel, we make a point of visiting vineyards to sample local wines and learn more about indigenous grape varietals. The second photograph is of our visit to a cantina in Sardinia, where we learned about the Nepente grape and tasted the red wine from this varietal. ■



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