

## Forget Work-Life Balance, Let's Talk Work-Day Balance: Wellness Strategies for a Healthy You

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10:00 a.m.: 1:1 with a chapter president about their academic and retention problems.

11:00 a.m.: Meet with a student who was sexually assaulted.

1:00 p.m.: Meet with a parent who believes their student has been hazed.

2:00 p.m.: Have a student break down crying in your office.

When this can be our daily schedule, how do we as fraternity/sorority advisors find balance in our day, let alone our life, between our multiple roles as advisor, counselor, mediator, planner, and advocate while ensuring we are our best selves?

Often, when we answer or are asked about work-life balance, we focus on balance in the aggregate of our entire life. This approach admittedly can seem huge and impossible and, at worst, downright depressing. Many of us struggle to see how it can be possible to balance all of the demands of our professional and personal lives with such challenging and demanding work in the current landscape and national spotlight on our field. In order for us to move the needle and change our reality, we have to acknowledge what stands in our way.

Identifying the obstacles in our daily work lives can feel like an ever-growing list of issues, concerns, and challenges. While it is almost impossible to create an exhaustive list, here are some of the areas that can provide some challenges for us in finding daily balance:

- 1) **Ourselves.** Your number one obstacle is namely yourself! Our self-talk, the stories we create in our head, the “stuff” we let stand between us and what we want/have to accomplish. Our own emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms can sometimes hold us back from handling the many challenges of our days.
- 2) **Time.** Time is a finite commodity. We get 24 hours in a day and often are left feeling like there is never enough time to get all of our work done.
- 3) **Resources (human/fiscal).** Like time, many individuals in our field do not have access to adequate resources. Be it trying to run a fraternity/sorority community as an office of one or without a significant budget, insufficient resources stands as an obstacle to doing the important and critical work we need to do.
- 4) **Tradition/culture/change.** Change is hard, but change within a larger fraternity/sorority community is even harder. With a deep rooted culture rested in decade long traditions,

it can feel impossible to introduce new ideas into a community.

- 5) **The open door.** In our field, we are encouraged to be available and approachable to our students through an open door policy. Yet, with constant interruptions and disruptions, how do we have an open door policy while also taking time to attend to e-mails, phone calls, and self-care?

As a way not to be debilitated by this reality and overcome the obstacles we face as fraternity/sorority advisors, it is important we not get lost in a focus on finding balance and solving every issue within the entire forest of our work and life, but instead focus on each tree or day of our lives to find greater wellness in our daily work and life. It is always a good idea to break something large into smaller parts as a strategy for accomplishing a bigger goal and, in doing so, the cumulative effect of finding daily balance can help our larger lives be better aligned and whole.

When we consider balance in our individual days and in our overall lives, it is important to consider the different dimensions of wellness as a framework to help us understand where we are in or off balance. Wellness is defined by the National Wellness Institute (n.d.) as “a conscious, self-directed, and evolving process of achieving full potential” that “is multidimensional and holistic by encompassing lifestyle, mental, and spiritual well-being, and the environment.” Developed by Dr. Bill Hettler, the six dimensions of wellness that are interconnected and holistic include: occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional. If we are off in one area, such as emotional wellbeing, it can have a negative impact on other areas, such as social or spiritual wellness. As you approach and go through each day, asking and checking in with yourself (and those you work with) about how you (and they) are doing in terms of the different dimensions of wellness can be a good starting place for gauging what area(s) you need to focus on employing a wellness strategy to help address.

Some helpful wellness strategies for greater work-day balance include, but are not limited to:

- **Take Time to Yourself:** Schedule your lunch hour and close your door. You can eat, workout, mediate, go for a walk, play on social media, watch Netflix, or do anything that brings you wellness in dimensions that you have identified as needing attention.
- **Set Boundaries:** Unless you have a standing meeting that cannot be moved, give yourself time at the beginning and end of the day for dedicated you time to check email and work on important items on your to-do list, including your own professional development goals and activities.

- **Be Vulnerable:** Do not be afraid to let your supervisor or those that report to you know what is going on in your work and personal life and express what you need. This vulnerability can help those around you support your wellness and help you find greater balance, as well as role model vulnerability and self-care for those around you.
- **Know Your People:** Know those people in and outside the field that you can go to for processing your day and serving as your sounding board. Do not be afraid to speak to a professional and use your network for support and guidance especially when you feel overwhelmed and stressed. Your people can often be your lifeline to finding balance.

As you think about your own work-day balance, ask yourself what wellness strategies might be helpful and possible for you and talk with your colleagues and friends about what strategies they use in their daily lives. Then, instead of focusing on your entire work-life balance, try to focus on one day and one wellness strategy you can use to help you feel better and more balanced than you did yesterday. Keep repeating each day until you have made that daily wellness strategy a habit that helps you towards your overall work-life balance!

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#### **Barbe “Bre” Berris, Ph.D.**

Bre serves as the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Kennesaw State. Before Kennesaw, her passion for fraternity/sorority began first at Oglethorpe University before moving to the Chi Phi Fraternity National Headquarters as the Director of Growth & Alumni Services. Bre earned her Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Georgia's Counseling and Student Personnel Services program with an emphasis in social justice, master's from Florida State University, and her bachelor's from University of North Georgia where she was initiated as a member of Delta Zeta Sorority. Her dissertation, "*Being a Minority in a Majority Situation: A Phenomenological Investigation of Black Women in Historically White Greek-Lettered Organizations*," served as a foundation for creating her passion of studying cross-racial membership within fraternities and sororities while serving as an advocate for all students. Additionally, she oversees programming on courageous conversations, safe spaces, mental health, time management/balance, and accountability and serves as a facilitator for UIFI, IMPACT, CAMPUSPEAK's interactive workshop programs, and several national organization's national/regional programming.

#### **Danny Glassman, Ph.D.**

Dr. Danny Glassmann currently serves as the Associate Dean of Students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where he works to balance and support multiple areas of student life focused on leadership development and campus connections, including sorority/fraternity

life. Dr. Glassmann received his Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Master of Science in College Student Personnel Services and Administration from the University of Central Arkansas and his Doctorate of Philosophy in Counseling and Student Personnel Services from the University of Georgia. When he is not working or cheering on the Vols, Danny finds personal balance by staying active, traveling, and spending time with family, friends, and his two puppies, Cooper and Sadie.

## References

National Wellness Institute. (n.d.). *Six Dimensions of Wellness*. Retrieved July 10, 2018 from [https://www.nationalwellness.org/page/Six\\_Dimensions](https://www.nationalwellness.org/page/Six_Dimensions).